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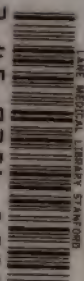
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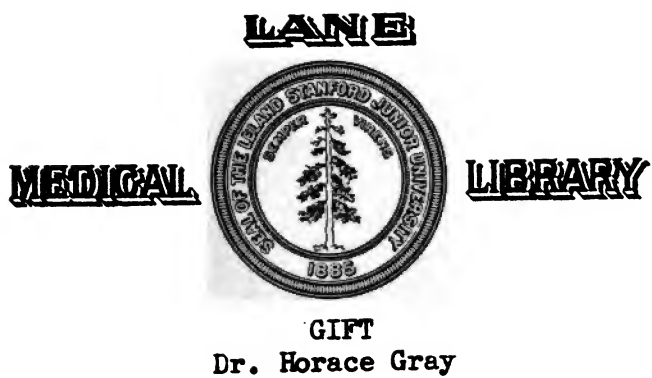
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# THE OLD AND THE NEW MAGIC



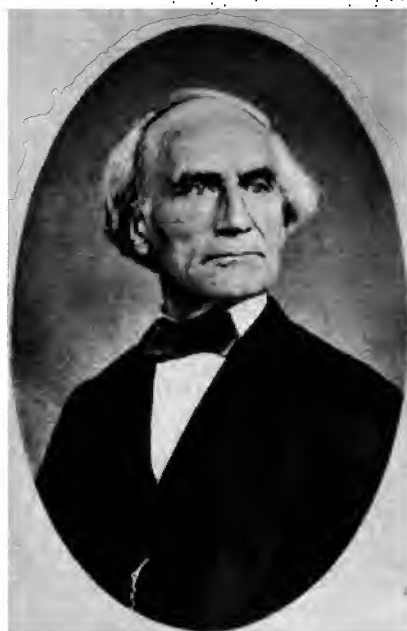


Horace Gray  
May 1909.









ALBION, N.Y., 1880

ALBION, N.Y., 1880

ROBERT HOULIHAN

THE OLD AND THE NEW

# MAGIC

BY  
HENRY  
RIDGELY  
EVANS

ILLUSTRATED

INTRODUCTION

BY

DR. PAUL  
CARUS

From the  
original  
illustrations  
of the  
author

CHICAGO

THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING CO.

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1906

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1906

TO MY GOOD FRIENDS,  
DR. SARAM R. ELLISON, HENRY V. A. PARSELL,  
AND  
ADRIAN PLATE, OF NEW YORK CITY,  
THOSE EARNEST COLLECTORS OF MAGICAL LITERATURE  
AND LOVERS OF THE ART OF ESCAMOTAGE,  
AND TO  
M. FÉLICIEN TREWEY,  
THE EMINENT PRESTIDIGITATEUR, SHADOWGRAPHIST,  
AND MIMIC, OF ASNIÈRES, FRANCE,  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

85256





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# THE OLD AND THE NEW MAGIC

## INTRODUCTION.

BY DR. PAUL CARUS.

The very word magic has an alluring sound, and its practice as an art will probably never lose its attractiveness for people's minds. But we must remember that there is a difference between the old magic and the new, and that both are separated by a deep chasm, which is a kind of color line, for though the latter develops from the former in a gradual and natural course of evolution, they are radically different in principle, and the new magic is irredeemably opposed to the assumptions upon which the old magic rests.

Magic originally meant priestcraft. It is probable that the word is very old, being handed down to us from the Greeks and Romans, who had received it from the Persians. But they in their turn owe it to the Babylonians, and the Babylonians to the Assyrians, and the Assyrians to the Sumero-Akkadians.

*Imga* in Akkad meant priest, and the Assyrians changed the word to *maga*, calling their high-priest *Rab-mag*; and considering the fact that the main business of priests in ancient times consisted in exorcising, fortune-telling, miracle-working, and giving out oracles, it seems justifiable to believe that the Persian term, which in its Latin version is *magus*, is derived from the Chaldæan and is practically the same; for the connotation of a wise man endowed with supernatural powers has always been connected with the word *magus*, and even to-day magician means wizard, sorcerer, or miracle-worker.

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While the belief in, and practice of, magic are not entirely absent in the civilization of Israel, we find that the leaders of orthodox thought had set their faces against it, at least as it appeared in its crudest form, and went so far as to persecute sorcerers with fire and sword.

We read in the Bible that when the Lord "multiplied his signs" in Egypt, he sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh to turn



SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR. (After Schnorr von Carolsfeld.)

their rods into serpents, that the Egyptian magicians vied with them in the performance, but that Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods, demonstrating thus Aaron's superiority. It is an interesting fact that the snake charmers of Egypt perform to-day a similar feat, which consists in paralyzing a snake so as to render it motionless. The snake then looks like a stick, but is not rigid.



JESUS CASTING OUT DEVILS (After Schnorr von Carolsfeld.)

Symbolizing Christ's power even over demons, according to the view of early Christianity.



CHRIST WITH THE WAND.

From a Christian Sarcophagus.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced from Mrs. Jameson's and Lady Eastlake's *History of our Lord*, London, 1872, Longmans, Green & Co., Vol. 1., pp. 347 and 349.

How tenacious the idea is that religion is and must be magic, appears from the fact that even Christianity shows traces of it. In fact, the early Christians (who, we must remember, recruited their ranks from the lowly in life) looked upon Christ as a kind of magician, and all his older pictures show him with a magician's wand in his hand. The resurrection of Lazarus, the change of water into wine, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the healing of diseases by casting out devils, and kindred miracles, according to the notions of those centuries, are performed after the fashion of sorcerers.



The adjoined illustration, one of the oldest representations of Christ, has been reproduced from Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea* (II, Table 14). It is a fresco of the catacombs, discovered in the St. Callisto Chapel, and is dated by Franz Xaver Kraus (*Geschichte der christlichen Kunst*, I, p. 153) at the beginning of the third century. Jesus holds in his left hand the scriptures, while his right hand grasps the wand with which he performs the miracle. Lazarus is represented as a mummy, while one of his sisters kneels at the Saviour's feet.

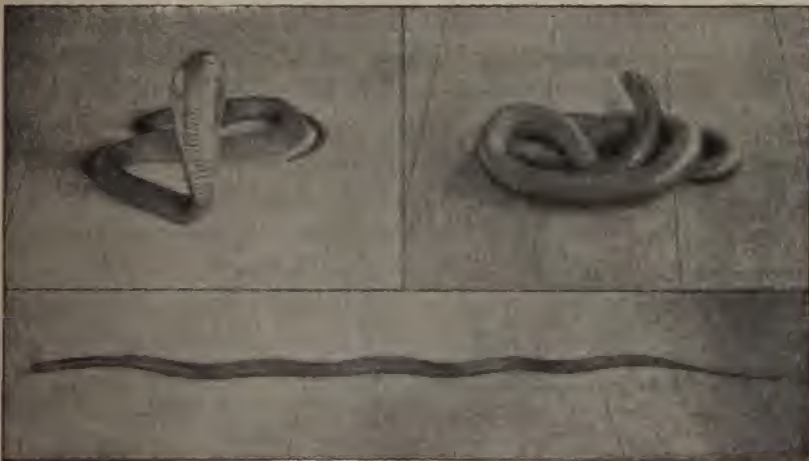
Goethe introduces the belief in magic into the very plot of *Faust*. In his despair at never finding the key to the world-problem in science, which, as he thinks, does not offer what we need, but useless truisms only, Faust hopes to find the royal road to knowledge by supernatural methods. He says:

"Therefore, from Magic I seek assistance,  
That many a secret perchance I reach  
Through spirit-power and spirit-speech,  
And thus the bitter task forego  
Of saying the things I do not know,—  
That I may detect the inmost force  
Which binds the world, and guides its course;  
Its germs, productive powers explore,  
And rummage in empty words no more!"





MOSES AND AARON PERFORMING THE MIRACLE OF THE SERPENTS BEFORE PHARAOH  
(After Schnorr von Carolsfeld.)



THE EGYPTIAN SNAKE NAJA HAJE MADE MOTIONLESS BY PRESSURE  
UPON THE NECK  
(Reproduced from Verworn after Photographs.)



Faust follows the will o' the wisp of pseudo-science, and so finds his efforts to gain useful knowledge balked. He turns agnostic and declares that we cannot know anything worth knowing. He exclaims:

"That which we do not know is dearly needed;  
And what we need we do not know."

And in another place:

"I see that nothing can be known."

But, having acquired a rich store of experience, Faust, at the end of his career, found out that the study of nature is not a useless rummage in empty words, and became converted to science. His ideal is a genuinely scientific view of nature. He says:

"Not yet have I my liberty made good:  
So long as I can't banish magic's fell creations  
And totally unlearn the incantations.  
Stood I, O Nature, as a man in thee,  
Then were it worth one's while a man to be.  
And such was I ere I with the occult conversed,  
And ere so wickedly the world I cursed."

To be a man in nature and to fight one's way to liberty is a much more dignified position than to go lobbying to the courts of the celestials and to beg of them favors. Progress does not pursue a straight line, but moves in spirals or epicycles. Periods of daylight are followed by nights of superstition. So it happened that in the first and second decades of the nineteenth century the rationalism of the eighteenth century waned, not to make room for a higher rationalism, but to suffer the old bugbears of ghosts and hobgoblins to reappear in a reactionary movement. Faust (expressing here Goethe's own ideas) continues:

"Now fills the air so many a haunting shape,  
That no one knows how best he may escape.  
What though the day with rational splendor beams,  
The night entangles us in webs of dreams.  
By superstition constantly ensnared,  
It spooks, gives warnings, is declared.  
Intimidated thus we stand alone.  
The portal jars, yet entrance is there none."

The aim of man is his liberty and independence. As soon as we understand that there are no spooks that must be conciliated by supplications and appeased, but that we stand in nature from which we have grown in constant interaction between our own aspirations and the natural forces regulated by law, we shall have confidence in our own faculties, which can be increased by investigation and a proper comprehension of conditions, and we shall no longer look beyond but around. Faust says:


"A fool who to the Beyond his eyes directeth  
And over the clouds a place of peers detecteth.  
Firm must man stand and look around him well,  
The world means something to the capable."

This manhood of man, to be gained by science through the conquest of all magic, is the ideal which the present age is striving to attain, and the ideal has plainly been recognized by leaders of human progress. The time has come for us "to put away childish things," and to relinquish the beliefs and practices of the medicine-man.

The old magic is sorcery, or, considering the impossibility of genuine sorcery, the attempt to practise sorcery. It is based upon the pre-scientific world-conception, which in its primitive stage is called animism, imputing to nature a spiritual life analogous to our own spirit, and peopling the world with individual personalities, spirits, ghosts, goblins, gods, devils, ogres, gnomes and fairies. The old magic stands in contrast to science; it endeavors to transcend human knowledge by supernatural methods and is based upon the hope of working miracles by the assistance of invisible presences or intelligences, who, according to this belief, could be forced or coaxed by magic into an alliance. The savage believes that the evil influence of the powers of nature can be averted by charms or talismans, and their aid procured by proper incantations, conjurations and prayers.

The world-conception of the savage is long-lingering, and its influence does not subside instantaneously with the first appearance of science. The Middle Ages are full of magic, and the belief in it has not died out to this day.

The old magic found a rival in science and has in all its aspects, in religion as well as in occultism, in mysticism and obscurantism, treated science as its hereditary enemy. It is now



succumbing in the fight, but in the meantime a new magic has originated and taken the place of the old, performing miracles as wonderful as those of the best conjurers of former days, nay, more wonderful; yet these miracles are accomplished with the help of science and without the least pretense of supernatural power.

The new magic originated from the old magic when the belief in sorcery began to break down in the eighteenth century, which is the dawn of rationalism and marks the epoch since which mankind has been systematically working out a scientific world-conception.

In primitive society religion is magic, and priests are magicians. The savage would think that if the medicine-man could not work miracles there would be no use for religion. Religion, however, does not disappear with the faith in the medicine-man's power. When magic becomes discredited by science, religion is purified. We must know, though, that religious reforms of this kind are not accomplished at once, but come on gradually in slow process of evolution, first by disappointment and then in exultation at the thought that the actualities of science are higher, nobler and better than the dreams of superstition, even if they were possible, and thus it appears that science comes to fulfil, not to destroy.

Science has been pressed into the service of magic by ancient pagan priests, who utilized mechanical contrivances in their temples to impress the credulous with the supernatural power of their gods.

The magic lantern, commonly supposed to be an invention of the Jesuit Kircher, in 1671, must have been secretly known among the few members of the craft of scientific magic at least as early as the end of the middle ages, for we have an old drawing, which is here reproduced, showing that it was employed in warfare as a means of striking terror in the ranks of the enemy. We have no information as to the success of the stratagem, but we may assume that in the days of a common belief in witchcraft and absolute ignorance of the natural sciences, it must have been quite effective with superstitious soldiers.



MAGIC LANTERN OF JOHANNES DE FONTANA,  
ABOUT 1420.

[The apparatus is quite crude in comparison with modern instruments of the same kind. It possesses no lens, the picture being drawn in an upright position upon cylindrical glass, presumably blackened with the exception of the figure. So far as known this is the oldest record of the use of the magic lantern.

Fontana's lantern was used, as F. M. Feldhaus informs us (*Gartenlaube*, 1905, Nov. 23, p. 848) by the *encignarius* or *antwerp maister*, i. e., the master of siege and fortress defenses, who from an appropriate hiding-place projected the image upon a convenient wall in the outside works of a fort so as to let assailants unexpectedly be confronted with the hideous form of a demon.]

While magic as superstition and as fraud is doomed, magic as an art will not die. Science will take hold of it and permeate it with its own spirit, changing it into scientific magic which is destitute of all mysticism, occultism and superstition, and comes to us as a witty play for our recreation and diversion.

It is an extraordinary help to a man to be acquainted with the tricks of prestidigitateurs, and we advise parents not to neglect this phase in the education of their children. The present age is laying the basis of a scientific world-conception, and it is, perhaps, not without good reasons that it has produced quite a literature on the subject of modern magic.

It might seem that if the public became familiar with the methods of the magicians who give public entertainments, their business would be gone. But this is not the case. As a peep behind the scenes and a knowledge of the machinery of the stage only help us to appreciate scenic effects, so an insight into the tricks of the prestidigitateur will only serve to whet our appetite for seeing him perform his tricks. The prestidigitateur will be forced to improve his tricks before an intelligent audience; he will be obliged to invent new methods, but not to abandon his art.

Moreover, it is not the trick alone that we admire, but the way in which it is performed. Even those who know how things can be made to disappear by sleight of hand, must confess that they always found delight in seeing the late Alexander Herrmann, whenever he began a *soirée*, take off his gloves, roll them up and make them vanish as if into nothingness.

It is true that magic in the old sense is gone; but that need not be lamented. The coarseness of Cagliostro's frauds has given way to the elegant display of scientific inventiveness and an adroit use of human wit. Traces of the religion of magic are still prevalent to-day, and it will take much patient work before the last remnants of it are swept away. The notions of magic still hold in bondage the minds of the uneducated and half-educated, and even the leaders of progress feel themselves now and then hampered by ghosts and superstitions.

We believe that the spread of modern magic and its proper comprehension are an important sign of progress, and in this

sense the feats of our Kellars and Herrmanns are a work of religious significance. They are instrumental in dispelling the fogs of superstition by exhibiting to the public the astonishing but natural miracles of the art of legerdemain; and while they amuse and entertain they fortify the people in their conviction of the reliability of science.

In speaking of modern magic, we refer to the art of the prestidigitateur, and exclude from its domain the experiments of hypnotism as well as the vulgar lies of fraud. There is no magic in the psychosis of an hysterical subject, who at the hypnotizer's suggestion becomes the prey of hallucinations; nor



ZÖLLNER'S ILLUSION

is there any art in the deceptions of the fortune-teller, whose business will vanish when the public ceases to be credulous and superstitious. The former is a disease, the latter mostly fraud. Magic proper (i. e., the artifices of prestidigitation) is produced by a combination of three factors: (1) legerdemain proper, or sleight of hand; (2) psychological illusions, and (3) surprising feats of natural science with clever concealment of their true causes. The success of almost every trick depends upon the introduction of these three factors.

The throwing of cards is mere dexterity; Zöllner's famous figures of parallel lines having an apparent inclination toward

one another is a pure sense-illusion (see cut here reproduced); so is the magical swing; while fire-eating (or better, fire-breathing) is a purely physical experiment. But it goes without saying that there is scarcely any performance of genuine prestidigitation which is not a combination of all three elements. The production of a bowl of water with living fishes in it is a combination of dexterity with psychology.

The trick with the glass dial (which is now exhibited by both Mr. Kellar and Mr. Herrmann, the nephew of the late Alexander Herrmann) is purely physical. The machinery used by them is entirely different, but in either case no sleight of hand nor any psychological diversion is needed, except in letting the accomplice behind the stage know the number to which he should point.

As an instance of a wonderful trick which is a mere sense-illusion we mention the magic swing, which is explained by Albert A. Hopkins in his comprehensive book on magic<sup>1</sup> as follows:

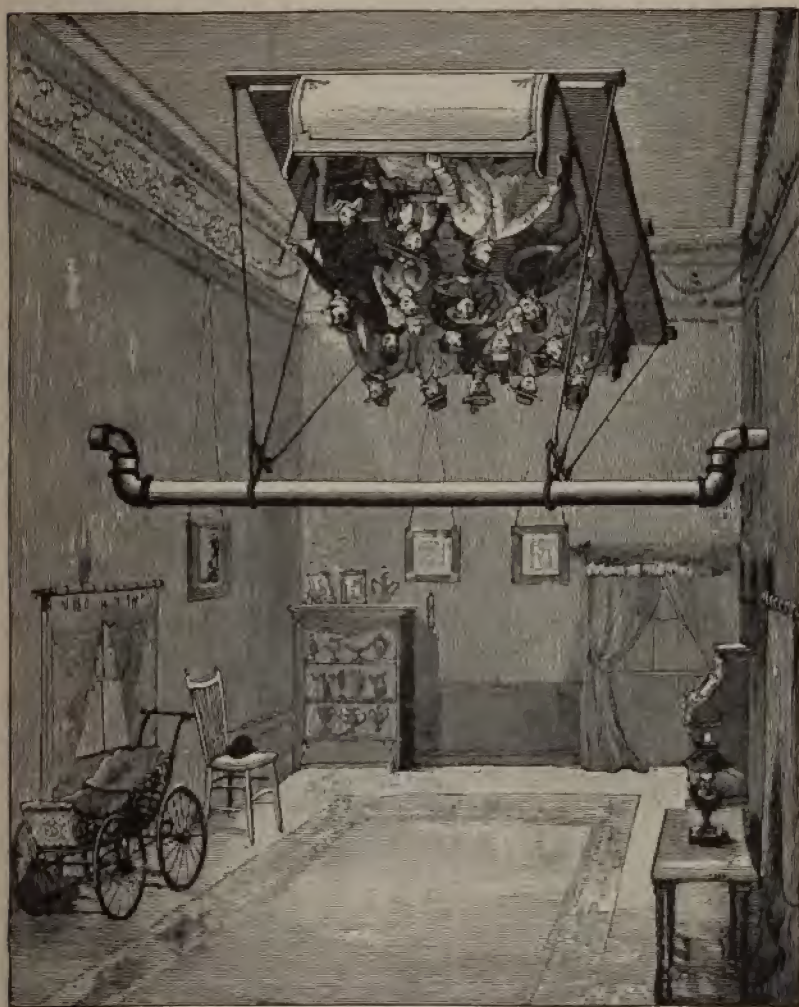
"Those who are to participate in the apparent gyrations of the swing—and there may be quite a number who enjoy it simultaneously—are ushered into a small room. From a bar crossing the room, near the ceiling, hangs a large swing, which is provided with seats for a number of people. After the people have taken their places, the attendant pushes the car and it starts into oscillation like any other swing. The room door is closed. Gradually those in it feel after three or four movements that their swing is going rather high, but this is not all. The apparent amplitude of the oscillations increases more and more, until presently the whole swing seems to whirl completely over, describing a full circle about the bar on which it hangs. To make the thing more utterly mysterious, the bar is bent crank fashion, the swing continues apparently to go round and round this way, imparting a most weird sensation to the occupants, until its movements begin gradually to cease and the complete rotation is succeeded by the usual back and forth swinging. The door of the room is opened, and the swinging party leave. Those who have tried it say the sensation is most peculiar.

"The illusion is based on the movements of the room proper. During the entire exhibition the swing is practically stationary, while the room rotates about the suspending bar. At the beginning of operations the swing may be given a slight push; the operators outside the room then begin to swing the room itself, which is really a large box journaled on the swing bar, starting

<sup>1</sup>*Magic, Stage Illusions, and Scientific Diversions, Including Trick Photography.* Compiled and edited by Albert A. Hopkins. With 400 illustrations. New York: Munn & Co. 1898.



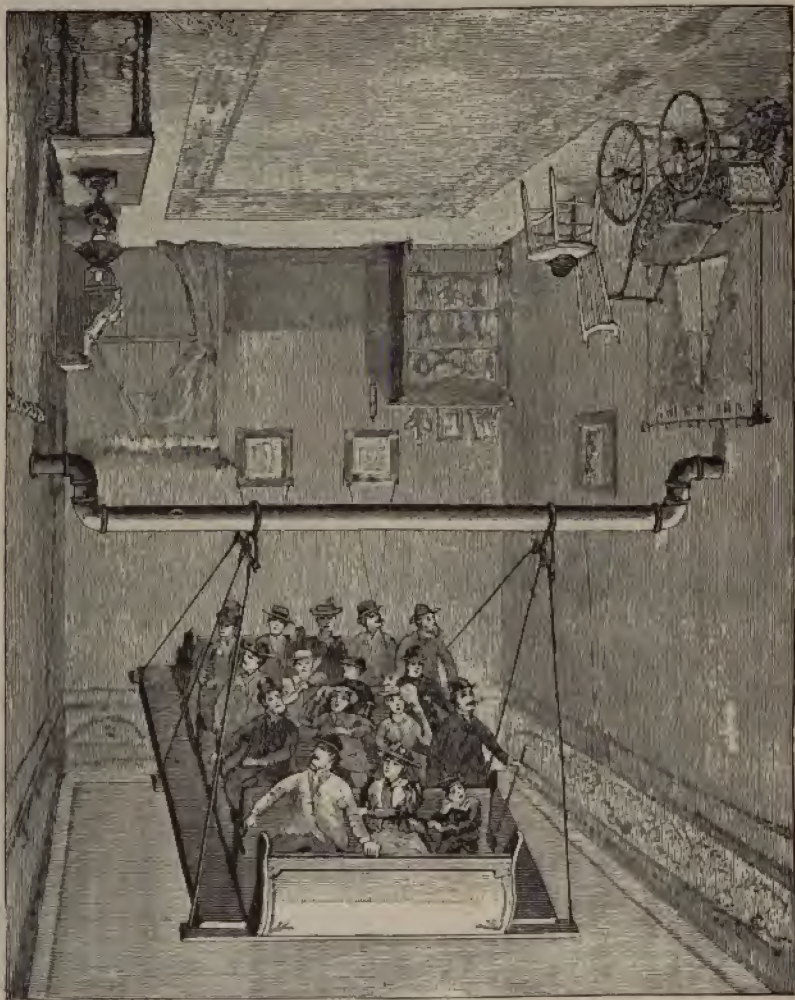
it off to correspond with the movements of the swing. They swing it back and forth, increasing the arc through which it moves until it goes so far as to make a complete rotation. The operatives do this without special machinery, taking hold of the sides and corners of the box or 'room.' At this



ILLUSION PRODUCED BY A RIDE IN THE SWING

time the people in the swing imagine that the room is stationary while they are whirling through space. After keeping this up for some time, the movement is brought gradually to a stop, a sufficient number of back and forth swings being given at the *finale* to carry out the illusion to the end.

"The room is as completely furnished as possible, everything being, of course, fastened in place. What is apparently a kerosene lamp stands on a table, near at hand. It is securely fastened to the table, which in its turn is fastened to the floor, and the light is supplied by a small incandescent lamp

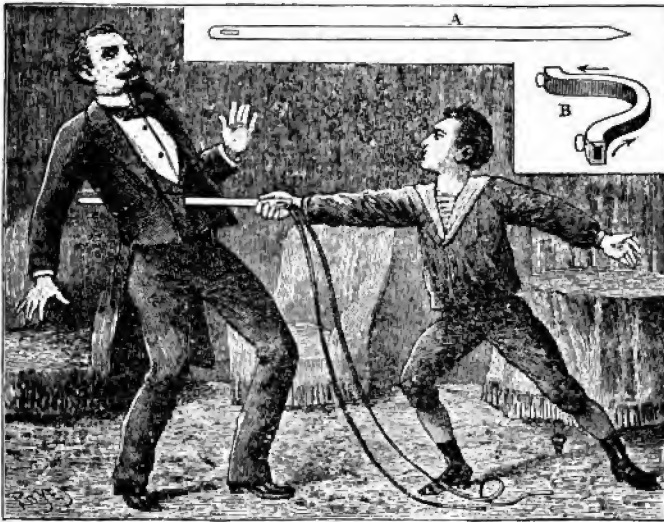


TRUE POSITION OF THE SWING

within the chimney, but concealed by the shade. The visitor never imagines that it is an electric lamp, and naturally thinks that it would be impossible for a kerosene lamp to be inverted without disaster, so that this adds to the deception materially. The same is to be said of the pictures hanging on the

wall, of the cupboard full of chinaware, of the chair with a hat on it, and of the baby carriage. All contribute to the mystification. Even though one is informed of the secret before entering the swing, the deception is said to be so complete that passengers involuntarily seize the arms of the seats to avoid being precipitated below."

The illusion is purely an instance of misguided judgment, which is commonly but erroneously called illusion of the senses, and belongs to the same category as the well-known Zöllner figures mentioned above and consisting of heavy lines crossed slantingly by lighter lines. The heavy lines are parallel but appear to diverge in the direction of the slant.



THE SWORD-TRICK.

Another very ingenious trick consists in apparently stabbing a man to death, the bloody end of the sword appearing at the back, yet leaving the man uninjured. Since the audience naturally will suspect that the point emerging from the back is not the true end of the sword, the trick has been altered to the effect of replacing the sword with a big needle (A), having tape threaded through its eye. When the assassin's needle has passed through the victim, it can be pulled out at the other side, together with the tape, where it appears reddened with blood. The stabbing, when performed quickly, before the spectator begins to

notice that the blade is somewhat reduced in size, is most startling, and makes a deep impression on the audience; but the artifice through which the manipulation is rendered possible is very simple. The sword, or needle, used for the purpose, is made of a very thin and flexible plate of steel, sufficiently blunt to prevent it from doing any harm. The victim, as if trying to ward off the dangerous weapon, takes hold of it and causes it to slip into the opening of a concealed sheath (B), which he carries strapped around his body, whereupon the assassin makes his thrust. The interior of the sheath contains a red fluid, which dyes the blade and helps to make the deception complete. The accompanying illustration sufficiently explains the performance

\* \* \*

While the performance of magical tricks is an art, the observation of them and also their description is a science, presupposing a quick and critical eye, of which very few people are possessed; and scientists by profession are sometimes the least fit persons to detect the place and mode of the deception.

How differently different persons watch the same events becomes apparent when we compare Professor Zöllner's reports of spiritualistic séances with those of other more critical witnesses. Professor Zöllner, for instance, writes (*Wissenschaftliche Abhandl.*, Vol. III, p. 354) in his description of one of the experiments with the famous American medium, Dr. Slade, that Professor Fechner's chair was lifted up about half a foot above the ground, while Dr. Slade touched the back of it lightly with his hand, and he emphasizes that his colleague, after hovering some time in the air, was suddenly dropped with great noise. The event as thus described is mystifying. However, when we carefully compare Professor Fechner's account, we come to the conclusion that the whole proceeding is no longer miraculous, but could be repeated by prestidigitateurs. Fechner writes that at the request of Dr. Slade, he himself (Professor Fechner), who was slim and light, took the place of Professor Braune. Dr. Slade turned round to Professor Fechner and bore his chair upward in a way which is not at all inexplicable by the methods of legerdemain. Professor Fechner does not mention that he hovered for some time in the air, but it is obvious that Dr. Slade



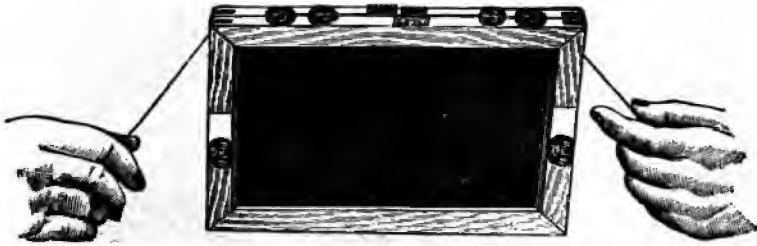
made the two professors change seats because he would scarcely have had the strength to lift up the heavy Professor Braune.



PROFESSOR ZÖLLNER AND DR. SLADE. (From Willmann.)

Similarly, the accounts of the famous painter, Gabriel Max, who also attended some of Slade's séances with Zöllner, make the performances of the medium appear in a less wonderful light.

Mr. Carl Willmann, a manufacturer of magical apparatus at Hamburg, and the author of several books on modern magic, publishes a circumstantial description of Professor Zöllner's double slates used in séances with Dr. Slade, which are now in possession of Dr. Borchardt of Hamburg, who bought them, with other objects of interest, from the estate of the deceased Professor Zöllner. The seals of these slates are by no means so intact as not to arouse the suspicion that they have been tampered with. To a superficial inspection they appear unbroken, but the sealing wax shows vestiges of finger marks, and Mr. Willmann has not the slightest doubt that the slates were opened underneath the seals with a thin heated wire, and that the seals were afterwards replaced.



THE OPENING OF SLADE'S SLATE BY MEANS OF A HEATED WIRE.  
(After Willmann.)

Professor Zöllner, the most famous victim of the bold medium, lacked entirely the necessary critical faculty, and became an easy prey of fraud. One of his colleagues, a professor of surgery in the University of Leipsic, had entered upon a bet with Professor Zöllner that a slate carefully sealed and watched by himself could not be written upon by spirits; he had left the slate in Professor Zöllner's hands in the confidence that the latter would use all necessary precautions. Professor Zöllner, however, not finding Dr. Slade at home, saw nothing wrong in leaving the sealed slate at the medium's residence and thus allowing it to pass for an indefinite time out of his own control, thinking that the seals were a sufficient protection. It goes without saying that his colleague at once cancelled the bet and took no more interest in the experiment.

The foot and hand prints which Dr. Slade produced were apparently made from celluloid impressions, which could easily be carried about and hidden in the pocket. This explains why these vestiges of the spirit were not of the size of Dr. Slade's hands or feet.

Mr. Willmann calls attention to the fact that the footprints, as published by Professor Zöllner, were made from feet whose stockings had been removed but a few moments before, for they still show the meshes of the knitting which quickly disappear as soon as the skin of the foot grows cold. Professor Zöllner did not see such trifles, and yet they are important, even if it were for the mere purpose of determining whether the spirits wear stockings made in Germany or America.

\* \* \*

The accounts of travelers are, as a rule, full of extravagant praise of the accomplishments of foreign magicians; thus, the feats of our American Indians are almost habitually greatly exaggerated. The same is true in a greater measure of fakirs and Hindu magicians. Recent accounts of a famous traveler are startling, but the problem is not whether or not what he tells is true (for only a little dose of good judgment is sufficient to recognize their impossibility), but whether or not he believes his tales himself. The problem is neither physical nor historical as to the reality of the events narrated; the problem is purely psychological as to his own state of mind.

The primitive simplicity of the methods of the Hindu jugglers and the openness of the theatre where they perform their tricks cause wonderment to those who are not familiar with the methods of legerdemain. Mr. Willmann, who had occasion to watch Hindu magicians, says in his book, *Moderne Wunder*, page 3: "After a careful investigation, it becomes apparent that the greatest miracles of Indian conjurers are much more insignificant than they appear in the latest reports of travelers. The descriptions which in our days men of science have furnished about the wonderful tricks of fakirs, have very little value in the shape in which they are rendered. If they, for instance, speak with admiration about the invisible growth of a flower before their very eyes, produced from the seed deposited by a fakir in



a flower-pot, they prove only that even men of science can be duped by a little trick the practice of which lies without the pale of their own experience."

Eye-witnesses whose critical capacities are a safeguard against imposition, relate more plausible stories. John T. McCutcheon describes the famous trick of growing a mango tree, as follows:

"The further away from India one is the greater appears the skill of these Hindu magicians. How often have we read the traveler's tales about the feats of Indian jugglers, and how eagerly we have looked forward to the time when we might behold them and be spellbound with amazement and surprise. When I first saw the Indian juggler beginning the preparations for the mango trick I was half prepared by the traveler's tales to see a graceful tree spring



THE SINGALESE CONJURER BEN-KI-BEY.  
(After Carl Willmann.)

quickly into life and subsequently see somebody climb it and pick quantities of nice, ripe mangoes. Nothing of the kind happened, as will be seen by the following description of the mango trick as it is really performed:

"The juggler, with a big bag of properties, arrived on the scene and immediately began to talk excitedly, meanwhile unpacking various receptacles taken from the bag. He squatted down, piped a few notes on a wheezy reed whistle and the show began. From his belongings he took a little tin can about the size of a cove oyster can, filled it with dirt and saturated the dirt with water. Then he held up a mango seed to show that there was nothing concealed by his sleeves; counted 'ek, do, tin, char,' or 'one, two, three, four,' and imbedded the seed in the moist earth. He spread a large cloth over the can and several feet of circumjacent ground. Then he played a few more notes on his reed instrument and allowed the seed a few minutes in which to take root and develop into a glorious shade tree. While he was waiting he

unfolded some snakes from a small basket, took a mongoose from a bag and entertained his audience with a combat between the mongoose and one of the snakes.

"'Ek, do, tin, char; one, two, three, four—plenty fight—very good mon-goose—biga snake—four rupee mongoose—two rupee snake—mongoose fight snake. Look—gentlymans—plenty big fight.'

"All this time the cloth remained peaceful and quiet, and there were no uneasy movements of its folds to indicate that the mango crop was flourishing. The juggler now turned his attention to it, however, poked his hands under the cloth, and after a few seconds of mysterious fumbling triumphantly threw off the cloth, and lo! there was a little bunch of leaves about as big as a sprig



MODERN SNAKE CHARMERS. (From Brehm.)

of water cress sticking up dejectedly from the damp earth. This was straight-way deluged with some water and the cloth again thrown over it.

"Once more there was a diversion. This time an exhibition of a shell game, in which the juggler showed considerable dexterity in placing the little ball where you didn't think it would be. Still the cloth revealed no disposition to bulge skyward, and a second time the juggler fumbled under it, talking hurriedly in Hindustani and making the occasion as interesting as possible. After much poking around he finally threw off the cloth with a glad cry, and there was a mango tree a foot high, with adult leaves which glistened with moisture. When his spectators had gazed at it for awhile he pulled the little tree up by the roots, and there was a mango seed attached, with the little sprouts springing out from it.

"The trick was over, the juggler's harvest of rupees and annas began, and soon his crowd faded away. A few minutes later, from a half-hidden seat

on the hotel veranda, I saw the wizard over across the street, beneath the big shade trees, folding up the mango tree and tucking it compactly into a small bag."<sup>1</sup>

To conjure ghosts has always been the highest ambition of performers of magical tricks, and we know that the magic lantern has been used for this purpose since mediæval days, but modern necromancy has been brought to perfection by Robertson and Pepper, through the invention of a simple contrivance, known under the name of Pepper's ghost, by which impalpable specters become plainly visible to the astonished eyes of the spectators.

For a description of these performances, as well as many other feats in the same line, we refer to Mr. Evans' fascinating explanations in the body of the present volume.

Tricks performed by mediums are in one respect quite different from the feats of prestidigitateurs; if they come up to the standards, they are, or might be, based upon the psychic dispositions of people. Believers will gladly be caught in the traps set for them and are, as a rule, grateful for the deception, while determined unbelievers will either prove altogether hopeless or will become so bewildered as to be likely to become believers. Sleight of hand is always a valuable aid to the medium; but, as tricks pure and simple, mediumistic séances are not different from the performances of prestidigitateurs, and differ only in this, that they claim to be done with the assistance of spirits. Mediums must be on the lookout and use different methods as the occasion may require. They produce rappings with their hands or their feet,\* or with mechanical devices hidden in their shoes; neither do they scorn the use of rapping tables with concealed batteries and electric wires.

The instances here adduced are sufficient to show that even the most complete deceptions admit of explanations which, in many instances, are much simpler than the spectators think.

<sup>1</sup>Chicago Record, April 22, 1899.

\*One of the Fox sisters could produce rappings through a peculiar construction of the bones of her foot, and Cumberland's big toe was blessed with a tendon of its own, enabling him to rap the floor quite vigorously without being detected.

Neither the marvelous feats of prestidigitateurs nor the surprising revelations of mediums should shake our confidence in science or make us slaves of superstition. The success of modern magic, which accomplishes more than the old magic or sorcery ever did, is a sufficient guarantee of the reliability of reason, and even where "now we see through a glass darkly," we must remain confident that when we grow in wisdom and comprehension we shall learn to see "face to face."



THE CONJURER. (By Prof. W. Zimmer.)

For all these reasons, knowledge of magic and its history, the false pretenses of the old magic and the brilliant success of modern magic should have a place in our educational program. I do not advocate its introduction into schools, but would recommend parents to let their children become acquainted with the remarkable performances of the best and greatest among modern magicians. We all should know something of the general methods of magic, and some time in our lives witness the

extraordinary feats, bordering on miracles, with which a prestidigitateur can dazzle our eyes and misguide our judgment.

Modern magic is not merely a diversion or a recreation, but may become possessed of a deeper worth when it broadens our insight into the rich possibilities of mystification, while a peep behind the scenes will keep us sober and prevent us from falling a prey to superstition.

## HISTORY OF NATURAL MAGIC AND PRESTIDIGITATION.

"Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me. . . . Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers."—*Dan. iv.*, 6-7.

"What, Sir! you dare to make so free,  
And play your hocus-pocus on us!"

—GOETHE: *Faust*, Scene V.

### I.

The art of natural magic dates back to the remotest antiquity. There is an Egyptian papyrus\* in the British Museum which chronicles a magical seance given by a certain Tchatcha-em-ankh before King Khufu, B. C. 3766. The manuscript says of the wizard: "He knoweth how to bind on a head which hath been cut off; he knoweth how to make a lion follow him as if led by a rope; and he knoweth the number of the stars of the house (constellation) of Thoth." It will be seen from this that the decapitation trick was in vogue ages ago, while the experiment with the lion, which is unquestionably a hypnotic feat, shows hypnotism to be very ancient indeed. Ennemoser, in his *History of Magic*, devotes considerable space to Egyptian thaumaturgy, especially to the wonders wrought by animal magnetism, which in the hands of the priestly hierarchy must have been miracles indeed to the uninitiated. All that was known of science was in

\*Westcar papyrus, XVIII dynasty; about B. C. 1550. In this ancient manuscript are stories which date from the early empire. "They are as old," says Budge (*Egyptian Magic*, London, 1899), "as the Great Pyramid."



possession of the guardians of the temples, who frequently used their knowledge of natural phenomena to gain ascendancy over the ignorant multitude.

An acquaintance with stage machinery and the science of optics and acoustics was necessary to the production of the many marvelous effects exhibited. Every temple in Egypt and Greece was a veritable storehouse of natural magic. Thanks to ancient writers like Heron of Alexandria, Philo of Byzantium, and the Fathers of the early Christian Church, we are able to fathom some of the secrets of the old thaumaturgists. The magi of the temples were adepts in the art of phantasmagoria. In the ancient temple of Hercules at Tyre, Pliny states that there was a seat of consecrated stone "from which the gods easily rose."

In the temple at Tarsus, Esculapius showed himself to the devout. Damascius says: "In a manifestation, which ought not to be revealed, . . . there appeared on the wall of a temple a mass of light, which at first seemed to be very remote; it transformed itself, in coming nearer, into a face evidently divine and supernatural, of severe aspect, but mixed with gentleness and extremely beautiful. According to the institutions of a mysterious religion the Alexandrians honored it as Osiris and Adonis."

By means of concave mirrors, made of highly polished metal, the priests were able to project images upon walls, in the air, or upon the smoke arising from burning incense. In speaking of the art of casting specula of persons upon smoke, the ingenious Salverte says: "The Theurgists caused the appearance of the gods in the air in the midst of gaseous vapors disengaged from fire. Porphyry admires this secret; Iamblichus censures the employment of it, but he confesses its existence and grants it to be worthy the attention of the inquirer after truth. The Theurgist Maximus undoubtedly made use of a secret analogous to this, when, in the fumes of the incense which he burned before the statue of Hecate, the image was seen to laugh so naturally as to fill the spectators with terror."

A. Rich, in his *Dictionary of Roman and Greek Antiquities*, relates, under the heading of the word "Adytum," that many of the ancient temples possessed chambers the existence of which was known only to the priests, and which served for the produc-

tion of their illusions. He visited one at Alba, upon the lake of Fucius. It was located amid the ruins of a temple, and was in a perfect state of preservation. This chamber of mysteries was formed under the apsis—that is to say, under the large semi-circular niche which usually sheltered the image of the god, at the far extremity of the edifice. “One part of this chamber,” says he, “is sunk beneath the pavement of the principal part of the temple (*cella*) and the other rises above it. The latter, then, must have appeared to the worshipers gathered together in the temple merely like a base that occupied the lower portion of the apsis, and that was designed to hold in an elevated position the statue of the god or goddess whose name was borne by the edifice. This sanctuary, moreover, had no door or visible communication that opened into the body of the building. Entrance therein was effected through a secret door in an enclosure of walls at the rear of the temple. It was through this that the priests introduced themselves and their machinery without being observed by the *hoi polloi*. But there is one remarkable fact that proves beyond the shadow of a doubt the purpose of the adytum. One discovers here a number of tubes or pipes which pierce the walls between the hiding-place and the interior of the temple. These tubes debouch at different places in the partitions of the *cella*, and thus permit a voice to be heard in any part of the building, while the person and place from which the sound issues remain unknown to the auditors.”

Sometimes the adytum was simply a chamber situated behind the apsis, as in a small temple which was still in existence at Rome in the sixteenth century. An architect named Labbacco has left us a description of the edifice. Travelers who have visited the remains of the temple of Ceres, at Eleusis, have observed a curious fact. The pavement of the *cella* is rough and unpolished, and much lower than the level of the adjacent porch, thereby indicating that a wooden floor, on a level with the portico, covered the present floor, and hid from view a secret vault designed to operate the machinery that moved the flooring. This view is confirmed by vertical and horizontal grooves, and the holes constructed in the side walls. Similar contrivances existed in India. Philostratus, in his *Life of Apollonius* (I, III,



Ch. v), says: "The Indian sages conducted Apollonius toward the temple of their god, marching in solemn procession and singing sacred hymns. Occasionally they would strike the earth in cadence with their staves, whereupon the ground moved like a sea in turmoil, now rising with them to the height of almost two feet, then subsiding to its regular level." The blows from the wands were evidently the cue for the concealed assistants to operate the machinery that moved the soil. Says Brown, in his *Stellar Theology*: "Among the buildings uncovered at Pompeii is a temple of Isis, which is a telltale of the mysteries of the Egyptian deity, for the secret stair which conducted the priests unseen to an opening back of the statue of the goddess, through whose marble lips pretended oracles were given and warnings uttered, now lies open to the day, and reveals the whole imposition."

The Bible has preserved to us the story of the struggle of Daniel with the priests of Bel, in which the secret door played its part. The Hebrew prophet refused to worship the idol Bel, whereupon the King said to him: "Doth not Bel seem to thee to be a living god? Seest thou not how much he eateth and drinketh every day?" Then Daniel smiled and said: "O King, be not deceived; for this is but clay within and brass without, neither hath he eaten at any time." The King sent for his priests and demanded the truth of them, declaring his intention of putting them to the sword should they fail to demonstrate the fact that the god really consumed the offerings of meat and wine. And the priests of Bel said: "Behold, we go out; and do thou, O King, set on the meats, and make ready the wine, and shut the door fast, and seal it with thy own ring. And when thou comest in the morning, if thou findest not that Bel hath eaten up all, we will suffer death, or else Daniel that hath lied against us." And they "little regarded it, because they had made under the table a secret entrance, and they always came in by it, and consumed those things."

Daniel detected the imposture in a very original manner. He caused ashes to be sifted upon the floor of the temple, whereby the footsteps of the false priests were made manifest to the enraged King of Babylon.

One reads in Pausanias (*Arcadia*, I VIII, Ch. xvi) that at Jerusalem the sepulcher of a woman of that country, named Helena, had a door which was of marble like the rest of the monument, and that this door opened of itself on a certain day of the year, and at a certain hour, by means of concealed machinery, thus antedating our time-locks. Eventually it closed itself. "At any other time," adds the author, "if you had desired to open it, you would have more easily broken it."

When Aeneas went to consult the Cumæan Sibyl, the hundred doors of the sanctuary opened of themselves, in order that the oracle might be heard.

"Ostia jamque domus patuere ingentia centum  
Sponte sua, vatisque ferunt responsa per auras."



APPARATUS FOR BLOWING A TRUMPET ON OPENING  
A DOOR.

According to Pliny, the doors of the labyrinth of Thebes were constructed in such a manner that when they were opened a sound resembling that of thunder greeted the astonished worshippers.

Heron, in his *Pneumatics*, describes an apparatus for blowing a trumpet on opening the door of a temple, the effect of which must have been awe inspiring to the uninitiated common people.

It is hardly necessary to give a detailed translation of the text of the Greek engineer, as the *modus operandi* of the experiment is sufficiently explained by reference to the descriptive

picture. It will suffice to add: One sees that when the door of the temple is opened, a system of cords, rods and pulleys causes a hemispherical cap, to the upper part of which the trumpet is attached, to sink into a vase full of water. The air compressed by the water escapes through the instrument, causing it to sound.



MECHANISM WHICH CAUSED THE TEMPLE DOORS TO OPEN WHEN A FIRE WAS LIGHTED ON THE ALTAR.

Another remarkable device is described in the *Pneumatics* of Heron, and consists of an apparatus which is entitled: "*Construction of a chapel wherein, when fire is lighted upon the altar, the doors open, and when it is extinguished, they close.*"

The altar is hollow, and when a fire is lighted thereon, the air contained in the interior expands and begins to press upon the water with which the globe situated beneath is filled. The water then rises through a bent tube which leads to a species of pot, into which it falls. The pot is suspended upon a cord which passes along a pulley, doubling immediately, in order to enroll itself about two cylinders, which turn upon pivots, said cylinders



EGYPTIAN ALTAR

forming the prolongation of the axes upon which the doors above turn. Around the same cylinders are enrolled in a contrary manner, two other cords, which also unite into one before passing along a pulley, and then hanging vertically for the support of a counterpoise.

It is clear that when the water from the globe enters the pot, the weight of the latter will be augmented and it will sink, pulling upon the cord which has been wound about the cylinders

in such a way as to cause the doors to open, when it is drawn in this direction.

The doors close themselves in the following manner: The bent tube, which places in communication the globe and the pot, forms a siphon, the longest branch of which plunges into the globe. When the fire is extinguished upon the altar, the air contained in the latter and in the globe, cools, and diminishes in volume. The water in the pot is then drawn into the globe,



HOW THE STATUES WERE MADE TO POUR LIBATIONS WHEN  
A FIRE WAS KINDLED ON THE ALTAR.

and the siphon, being thus naturally influenced, operates until the water in the pot has passed over into the globe. In measure as the pot lightens, it remounts under the constraint of the counterpoise, and the latter, in its descent, closes the doors through the intermedium of the cords wound around the cylinders.

Heron says that mercury was sometimes used in place of water, by reason of its superior weight.

Certain altars were provided with such mechanism as to afford to the faithful even more astonishing spectacles. Here is another experiment from the learned Heron:

*"To construct an altar so that when one kindles the fire thereon, the statues which are at the sides shall pour out libations."*

There should be a pedestal, upon which are placed the statues, and an altar closed on all sides. The pedestal should communicate with the altar through a central tube, also with the statues by means of tubes, the ends of the latter terminating in cups held by the statues. Water is poured into the pedestal through a hole, which is stopped up immediately afterward.

If, then, a fire be kindled upon the altar, the air within expanding, will penetrate the pedestal and force out the water; but the latter, having no other outlet than the tubes, mounts into the cups and the statues thus perform libations, which last as long as the fire does. Upon the fire being extinguished, the libations cease, and recommence as many times as it is rekindled.

The tube through which the heat is conveyed should be larger at the middle than at the extremities, to allow the heat, or more especially, the draft, which it produces, to accumulate in an inflation, in order to be most effectual.

The priests of the temples of old were truly masters of the arts of mechanics and pneumatics.

According to Father Kircher (*Oed. Aegypti*, Vol. II), an author, whom he calls Bitho, states that there was at Saïs a temple of Minerva containing an altar upon which, when a fire was kindled, Dionysos and Artemis (Bacchus and Diana) poured out milk and wine, while a dragon hissed. The use of steam is indicated here.

The Jesuit savant possessed in his museum an apparatus which probably came from some ancient Egyptian temple. It consisted of a hollow hemispherical dome supported by four columns, and placed over the image of the goddess of the numerous breasts. To two of the columns were adjusted movable holders, upon which lamps were fixed. The hemisphere was hermetically closed beneath by a metallic plate. The small altar, into which the milk was poured, communicated with the interior

of the statue by a tube reaching nearly to the bottom; it was also connected with the hollow dome by a tube having a double bend. At the moment of sacrifice, the two lamps, which were turned by means of movable holders directly beneath the lower plate of the dome, were lighted, thereby causing the air inclosed

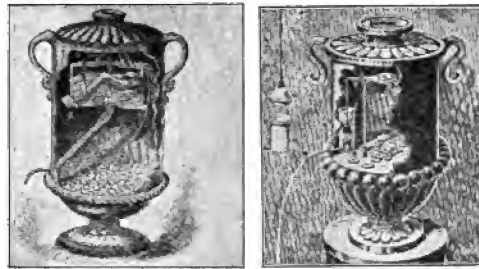


THE MIRACULOUS STATUE OF CYBELE.

in the dome to expand. This expanded air, passing through the tube, pressed upon the milk shut within the altar, forcing it to ascend the straight tube into the interior of the statue and up to the height of the breasts of the goddess. A series of little ducts, branching off from the principal tube, conveyed the liquid into the breasts. From these mammary glands of bronze the

lacteal fluid streamed out, to the great admiration of the spectators, who believed that a miracle had taken place. When the sacrifice was finished, the lamps were extinguished by the attendant priest of the shrine, and the milk ceased to flow.

There were many other mechanical devices of great interest, such as the miraculous vessels used in the temples of Egypt and Greece, and the apparatus that formed part of the Grecian puppet-shows and other theatrical performances; but these hardly come within the scope of this chapter. Philo of Byzantium and Heron of Alexandria both left exhaustive treatises on the mechanic arts as understood by the ancients. Philo's work has unfortunately been lost, but Heron's treatise has a world of interest to anyone who is attracted to the subject.



A RECENTLY PATENTED  
SLOT MACHINE ALMOST  
IDENTICAL WITH HERON'S  
WATER-VESSEL

LUSTRAL WATER-VESSEL  
DESCRIBED BY HERON  
ABOUT 100 B.C.

Besides the miracle-mongers of antiquity there were also cup-and-ball conjurers, who were called "acetabularii," from the Latin word *acetabulum*, which means a cup, and professors of natural magic in general who laid no claim to supernatural powers. They wandered from place to place, giving their shows. The grammarian, Athenæus, in his *Deipnosophists*, or "Banquet of the Learned" (A. D. 228), mentions a number of famous conjurers and jugglers of Greece. He says: "The people of Histiaea and of Oreum erected in their theatre a brazen statue holding a die in its hand to Theodorus the juggler." Xenophon, the conjurer, was very popular at Athens. He left behind him a pupil named Cratisthenes, "a citizen of Phlias; a man who



used to make fire spout up of its own accord, and who contrived many other extraordinary sights, so as almost to make men discredit the evidence of their own senses. And Nymphodorus, the conjurer, was another such man. . . . And Diopeithes, the Locrian, according to the account of Phanodemus, when he came to Thebes, fastened round his waist bladders full of wine and milk, and then, squeezing them, pretended that he was drawing up those liquids out of his mouth. And Noëmon gained



ORIENTAL CONJURER PERFORMING THE CUP-AND-BALL TRICK, WITH SNAKE  
EFFECT INTRODUCED.

From an old and rare book called *The Universal Conjuror or the Whole Art as Practised by the Famous Breslaw, Katerfelto, Jonas, Flockton, Conus, and by the Greatest Adepts in London and Paris, etc.* London.

(From the Ellison Collection, New York.)

a great reputation for the same sort of tricks. . . . There were also, at Alexander's court, the following jugglers who had a great name: Scymnus of Tarentum, and Philistides of Syracuse, and Heraclitus of Mitylene." (*Deipn.* Epit., B. I, c. 34, 35.)



CONJUROR PULLING A TOOTH BY PISTOL.

From a rare book called *The Whole Art of Hocus Pocus, Containing the Most Dexterous Feats of Sleight-of-hand Performed by Katerfelto, Breslaw, Boas, etc.* London, 1812. (From the Ellison Collection, New York.)



## II.

In the Middle Ages the art of magic was ardently cultivated, in spite of the denunciations of the Church. Many pretenders to necromancy made use of the secrets of optics and acoustics, and gained thereby a wonderful reputation as genuine sorcerers. Benvenuto Cellini, sculptor, goldsmith and man-at-arms, in that greatest of autobiographies,\* records a magical seance which reads like a chapter from the Arabian Nights.

He says: "It happened through a variety of singular accidents that I became intimate with a Sicilian priest, who was a man of very elevated genius and well instructed in both Latin and Greek letters. In the course of conversation one day, we were led to talk about the art of necromancy, *à propos* of which I said: 'Throughout my whole life I have had the most intense desire to see or learn something of this art.' Thereto the priest replied: 'A stout soul and a steadfast must the man have who sets himself to such an enterprise.' I answered that of strength and steadfastness of soul I should have enough and to spare, provided I found the opportunity. Then the priest said: 'If you have the heart to dare it, I will amply satisfy your curiosity.' Accordingly we agreed upon attempting the adventure.

"The priest one evening made his preparations, and bade me find a comrade, or not more than two. I invited Vincenzo Romoli, a very dear friend of mine, and the priest took with him a native of Pistoja, who also cultivated the black art. We went together to the Colosseum; and there the priest, having arrayed himself in necromancers' robes, began to describe circles on the earth with the finest ceremonies that can be imagined. I must say that he had made us bring precious perfumes and fire, and also drugs of fetid odor. When the preliminaries were completed, he made the entrance into the circle; and taking us by the hand, introduced us one by one inside of it. Then he assigned our several functions; to the necromancer, his comrade, he gave the pentacle to hold; the other two of us had to look after the fire and the perfumes; and then he began his incantations. This

\**Memoirs of Cellini*, Book I, Chapter LXIV.

lasted more than an hour and a half, when several legions appeared and the Colosseum was all full of devils. I was occupied with the precious perfumes, and when the priest perceived in what numbers they were present, he turned to me and said: 'Benvenuto, ask them something.' I called on them to reunite me with my Sicilian Angelica."

It seems the spirits did not respond. The magic spells were found inoperative, whereupon the priest dismissed the demons, observing that the presence of a pure boy was requisite to the successful accomplishment of the séance.

Another night Cellini and the sorcerer repaired to the ruins of the Colosseum. The artist was accompanied by a boy of twelve years of age, who was in his employ, and by two friends, Agnolino Gaddi and the before-mentioned Romoli. The necromancer, after describing the usual magic circle and building a fire, "began to utter those awful invocations, calling by name on multitudes of demons who are captains of their legions . . . ; insomuch that in a short space of time the whole Colosseum was full of a hundredfold as many as had appeared upon the first occasion." At the advice of the wizard, Cellini again asked to be reunited with his mistress. The sorcerer turned to him and said: "Hear you what they have replied; that in the space of one month you will be where she is." The company within the magic circle were now confronted by a great company of demons. The boy declared that he saw four armed giants of immense stature who were endeavoring to get within the circle. They trembled with fear. The necromancer, to calm the fright of the boy, assured him that what they beheld was but *smoke and shadows*, and that the spirits were under his power. As the smoke died out, the demons faded away, and Cellini and his friends left the place fully satisfied of the reality of the conjurations. As they left the Colosseum, the boy declared that he saw two of the demons leaping and skipping before them, and often upon the roofs of the houses. The priest paid no attention to them, but endeavored to persuade the goldsmith to renew the attempt on some future occasion, in order to discover the secret treasures of the earth. But Cellini did not care to meddle more in the black art.

What are we to believe about this magic invocation? Was Cellini romancing? Though a vainglorious, egotistical man, he was truthful, and his memoirs may be relied on.

John Addington Symonds, one of the translators of Cellini's autobiography, remarks: "Imagination and the awe-inspiring influences of the place, even if we eliminate a possible magic lantern among the conjurer's appurtenances, are enough to account for what Cellini saw. He was credulous; he was superstitious."

Sir David Brewster, who quotes Cellini's narrative in his *Natural Magic*, explains that the demons seen in the Colosseum "were not produced by any influence upon the imaginations of the spectators, but were actual optical phantasms, or the images of pictures or objects produced by one or more concave mirrors or lenses. A fire is lighted and perfumes and incense are burnt, in order to create a ground for the images, and the beholders are rigidly confined within the pale of the magic circle. The concave mirror and the objects presented to it having been so placed that the persons within the circle could not see the aerial image of the objects by the rays directly reflected from the mirror, the work of deception was ready to begin. The attendance of the magician upon his mirror was by no means necessary. He took his place along with the spectators within the magic circle. The images of the devils were all distinctly formed in the air immediately above the fire, but none of them could be seen by those within the circle.

"The moment, however, the perfumes were thrown into the fire to produce smoke, the first wreath of smoke that rose through the place of one or more of the images would reflect them to the eyes of the spectators, and they would again disappear if the wreath was not followed by another. More and more images would be rendered visible as new wreaths of smoke arose, and the whole group would appear at once when the smoke was uniformly diffused over the place occupied by the images."

Again, the magician may have been aided by a confederate amid the ruins, who manipulated a magic lantern, or some device of the kind. The magician himself may have been provided with a box fitted up with a concave mirror, the lights and figures of

the demons. The assertion of the boy that he saw demons skipping in front of him, etc., would be accounted for by the magic box being carried with them.

Says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, in speaking of Cellini's adventure: "The existence of a camera at this latter date (middle of sixteenth century) is a fact, for the instrument is described by Baptista Porta, the Neapolitan philosopher, in the *Magia Naturalis* (1558). And the doubt how magic lantern effects could have been produced in the fourteenth century, when the lantern itself is alleged to have been invented by Athanasius Kircher in the middle of the seventeenth century, is set at rest by the fact that glass lenses were constructed at the earlier of these dates,—Roger Bacon, in his *Discovery of the Miracles of Art, Nature and Magic* (about 1260), writing of glass lenses and perspectives so well made as to give good telescopic and microscopic effects, and to be useful to old men and those who have weak eyes."

Chaucer, in the *House of Fame*, Book III, speaks of "appearances such as the subtil tregetours perform at feasts"—images of hunting, falconry and knights jousting, with the persons and objects instantaneously disappearing.

Later on Nostradamus conjured up a vision of the future king of France in a magic mirror, for the benefit of Marie de Medeci. This illusion was effected by mirrors adroitly concealed amid hanging draperies.

In the sixteenth century conjurers wandered from place to place, exhibiting their tricks at fairs, in barns, and at the castles of noblemen. They were little more than strolling gypsies or vagabonds. Reginald Scott, in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), enumerates some of the stock feats of these mountebanks. The list includes, "swallowing a knife; burning a card and reproducing it from the pocket of a spectator; passing a coin from one pocket to another; converting money into counters, or counters into money; conveying money into the hand of another person; making a coin pass through a table or vanish from a handkerchief; tying a knot and undoing it 'by the power of words'; taking beads from a string, the ends of which are held fast by another person; making a coin to pass from one box to another; turning wheat into flour 'by the power of

words'; burning a thread and making it whole again; pulling ribbons from the mouth; thrusting a knife into the head of a man; putting a ring through the cheek, and cutting off a person's head and restoring it to its former position."

Conjuring with cups and balls belongs to this list.



EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CONJURER PERFORMING THE CUP-AND-BALL TRICK.  
(From an Old Print, Ellison Collection.)

The conjurer of the sixteenth century, and even of later date, wore about his waist a sort of bag, called *gibécière*, from its resemblance to a game bag, ostensibly to hold his paraphernalia. While delving into this bag for various articles to be used in his tricks, the magician succeeded in making substitutions and secretly getting possession of eggs, coins, balls, etc. It was a very clumsy device, but indispensable for an open-air



performer, who usually stood encircled by the spectators. Finally, the suspicious-looking *gibécière* was abandoned by all save strolling mountebanks, and a table with a long cloth substituted. This table concealed an assistant, who made the necessary transformations required in the act, by means of traps and other devices. Comus, the elder, in the eighteenth century, abandoned the long table covers and the concealed assistant for the *servante*. But his immediate competitors still adhered to the draped tables, and a whole generation of later conjurers, among whom may be mentioned Comte, Bosco and Phillippe, followed their example. Robert-Houdin struck the keynote of reform in 1844. He sarcastically called the suspiciously draped table a *boite à compère* (wooden confederate).

Conjurers in the seventeenth century were frequently known as *Hocus Pocus*. These curious words first occur in a pamphlet printed in 1641, in which the author, speaking of the sights of Bartholomew fair, mentions "*Hocus Pocus*, with three yards of tape or ribbon in his hand, showing his art of legerdemain." The seventeenth century is the age of the strolling mountebank, who performed wherever he could get an audience—in the stable, barnyard, street or fair. From him to the prestidigitateur of the theatre is a long step, but no longer than from the barnstorming actor to the artist of the well-appointed playhouse. There is evolution in everything. It was not until the eighteenth century that conjuring became a legitimate profession. This was largely owing to the fact that men of gentle birth, well versed in the science of the age, took up the magic wand, and gave the art dignity and respectability.

It was not until the eighteenth century that natural magic was shorn of charlatanism, but even then the great Pinetti pretended to the occult in his exhibition of so-called "second sight." He always avoided the Papal States, taking warning from the fate of Cagliostro. Magic and spiritism were in bad odor in the dominions of the Pope. Towards the middle of the century we hear of Jonas, Carlotti, Katerfelto, Androletti, Philadelphia, Rollin, Comus I and II. Comus II was famous for coining hard words. He advertised in London, "various uncommon experiments with his Enchanted Horologium, Pyxidees Literarum,

and many curious operations in Rhabdology, Steganography and Phylacteria, with many wonderful performances on the grand Dodecahedron, also Chartomantic Deceptions and Kharamatic Operations. To conclude with the performance of the Teretopaest Figure and Magical House; the like never seen in this kingdom before; and will astonish every beholder." These magical experiments were doubtless very simple. What puzzled the spectators must have been the names of the tricks.

Rollin, a Frenchman, after accumulating a fortune, purchased the chateau of Fontenoy-aux-Roses, in the department of the Seine. He was denounced under the Red Terror, and suffered death by the guillotine, in 1793. When the warrant for his execution was read to him, he remarked, with a smile, "That is the first paper I cannot conjure away."

### III.

I now come to the Count Edmond de Grisy, Pinetti's great rival in the field of conjuring.

The duel for supremacy between these eminent magicians is told in the chapter on Pinetti. The father of De Grisy, the Count de Grisy, was killed at the storming of the Tuilleries, while defending the person of his king, Louis XVI, from the mob. Young De Grisy was in Paris at the time, and, profiting by the disorders in the capital, was enabled to pass the barriers and reach the small family domain in Languedoc. Here he dug up a hundred louis, which his father had concealed for any unforeseen accident; to this money he added some jewels left by his mother. With this modest sum, he proceeded to Florence, where he studied medicine, graduating as a physician at the age of twenty-seven. He became a professional magician, and had an adventure at Rome which is well worth relating. He was requested to perform before Pius VII, and ransacked his brains to devise a trick worthy of a Pope. On the day before the mystic séance he happened to be in the shop of a prominent watchmaker, when a lackey came in to ask if His Eminence the Cardinal de ———'s watch was repaired.

"It will not be ready until this evening," answered the watch-maker. "I will do myself the honor of personally carrying it to your master."

The lackey retired.

"That is a handsome watch you have there," said De Grisy.

"Yes," replied the jeweler. "it is valued at more than ten thousand francs. It was made by the celebrated Bréguet. Strangely enough, the other day I was offered a similar time-piece, by the same artist, for one thousand francs."

"Who was he?" asked the Count.

"A young prodigal and gambler, belonging to a noble family, who is now reduced to selling his family jewels."

Like a flash of lightning, a scheme for working a splendid mystification passed through De Grisy's mind. He nonchalantly said:

"Where is this young rake to be found?"

"In a gaming house, which he never quits."

"Well, then, I will buy this masterpiece of Bréguet's. Have the kindness to purchase it for me, and engrave upon it the Cardinal's coat-of-arms, so that it will be a replica of His Eminence's chronometer."

The jeweler, assured of De Grisy's discretion and honor, though probably suspecting the use to which the timepiece would be subjected, immediately left his shop, and returned after a little while with the gambler's watch.

"Here it is," he cried. "To-night I shall have it ready for you."

At the appointed hour he brought the two watches for De Grisy's inspection. They were facsimiles. The conjurer took his purchase, and the next day appeared at the pontifical palace, where a most distinguished audience greeted him. The Pope sat on a raised dais; near him were the cardinals in their brilliant robes of crimson.

After performing a series of magical feats, De Grisy came to his *pièce de résistance*. The difficulty was to obtain the loan of the Cardinal's watch, and that without asking him directly for it. To succeed the conjurer had recourse to a ruse. At his

request several watches were offered to him, but he returned them as not suited to the experiment.

"I desire a timepiece that will be easily identified. I should prefer one of rather large size," said De Grisy.

"Cardinal," said His Holiness, "oblige me by lending your watch to M. de Grisy."

With great reluctance the Cardinal de —— handed his precious chronometer to the conjurer. It seems he set great value on its exaggerated size, alleging, with considerable show of reason, that the works acted better in a large case.

In order to prove the solidity and excellence of the chronometer, De Grisy let it fall to the ground. A cry of alarm arose on all sides. The Cardinal, pale with rage, bounded from his chair, exclaiming: "This is a sorry jest, sir!"

"Do not be alarmed, monsignor," said De Grisy, "the watch will escape scathless from its many trials." He handed the broken timepiece to the Cardinal. "Do you recognize this as your watch?"

The prelate gazed anxiously at the coat-of-arms engraved inside of the case, and replied, with a profound sigh:

"Yes, that is my watch."

"You are certain of it?"

"Quite certain! But I seriously doubt your power to restore it."

"We shall see!" said the conjurer.

De Grisy's assistant now brought in a brass mortar and pestle. The watch was cast into the mortar and pounded to atoms. Some magic powder was poured into the receptacle and a torch applied. There was a detonation, followed by a cloud of smoke. The spectators were invited to examine the ingot of gold—all that remained of the precious chronometer. Pius VII peered curiously into the mortar. De Grisy, seizing the opportunity, adroitly popped the duplicate timepiece into a pocket of the Pope's robe. At the proper moment he pretended to pass the ingot into the pontiff's pocket, which resulted in the discovery of the Cardinal's watch, made whole again. This clever trick created a great sensation in Rome, and drew crowds to De Grisy's performances. Poor De Grisy seemed doomed to misfor-

tune. His young son was killed accidentally by a spectator, during an exhibition of the pistol trick at Strasburg. A real bullet got mixed up with the false bullets, and was loaded into the weapon. De Grisy was tried and convicted of "homicide through imprudence," and sentenced to six months' imprisonment, during which time his wife died. On his release, he assumed the name of Torrini, which was that of his brother-in-law and faithful assistant. He retired to the provinces of France, and never appeared again in the large cities. He died a broken-hearted man at Lyons.

Torrini was a skillful performer with cards, as Robert-Houdin testifies. He invented a trick which he called "The Blind Man's Game of Piquet." While blindfolded he would play piquet and defeat adepts at the game. This trick was one of the features of his entertainments, and always gained him great applause. The secret consisted in substituting a prepared pack for the ordinary pack used. After the spectator had shuffled the cards and handed them to Torrini to cut, the conjurer would rest his hand momentarily upon the pack, while he made some observation to his opponent. Then it was that the substitution was artfully effected by means of a "magic box," which the prestidigitateur had concealed in the sleeve of his coat. Pressure upon the table caused a spring in the box to shoot out a prepared pack of cards, while a pair of pincers at the same time seized the recently shuffled pack and drew it up into the hidden receptacle. This ingenious piece of apparatus Torrini had obtained from a gambler named Zilbermann.

While attempting to cheat an opponent, the apparatus had hung fire, and Zilbermann was detected *in flagrante delicto*. A duel was the result, and Zilbermann was mortally wounded. He sent for Torrini, whose conjuring abilities he greatly admired, and presented him with the box. Soon afterwards he died.

Torrini never used the apparatus except in his conjuring performances. He was a man of honor and not a *chevalier d'industrie*.

## THE CHEVALIER PINETTI.

"The Age of Romance has not ceased; it never ceases; it does not, if we will think of it, so much as very sensibly decline."—CARLYLE: *The Diamond Necklace*.

### I.

Paris! Time—the latter half of the eighteenth century!

Louis XVI is on the throne of France, relieving the ennui of court etiquette by working at locksmithing. His beautiful consort, Marie Antoinette, amuses herself playing at dairy-farming, *à la Watteau*, in the gardens of the little Trianon. Dr. Guillotin, as yet, has not even dreamed of that terrible machine of wood and steel to be called by his name. Danton, Marat and Robespierre—the "bloody triumvirate"—are unknown to fame.

It is the age of powder and patches, enormous hoop-skirts, embroidered coats, lace ruffles, cocked hats, silk stockings and swords. Gentlemen meet and exchange snuff boxes; fight duels at times, despite the royal edict; indulge in grandiose gallantries. Noblemen in their coaches-and-four, on their way to Versailles (which to them is heaven on earth), drive recklessly through the narrow streets of the capital, splashing the pedestrians with mud from the kennels, and knocking down citizens with impunity. The aristocracy live to be amused.

*Vive la bagatelle!* is the watchword of the gentle born, and when the Chevalier Pinetti, knight of the German Order of Merit of St. Philippe, comes to town, there is a grand rush for seats at the theatre to see him perform. The Chevalier is the greatest conjurer of the age, also a learned student of physics and member of various scientific bodies in France, England and Germany.

I have in my possession an old print, picked up in Paris, a portrait of the Chevalier. This picture is an allegorical affair. Two winged cupids are depicted placing the bust of Pinetti in the Temple of Arts. Strewn about the place are various instru-



PINETTI

ments used in physics and mathematics. The motto appended to this curious print is as follows: *Des genies placent le buste de M. le Professeur Pinetti dans le temple des arts, au milieu des instruments de physique et de mathématique.*



At Versailles the Chevalier is received with acclaim. His "shirt trick" produces a great sensation. Imagine whisking the shirt off a gentleman's back without disturbing the rest of his clothing. But of that, anon! The "second-sight" of the Chevalier's spouse savors of the supernatural; and his "ring and fish" feat is just too wonderful for anything. In short, the conjurer is voted to be very amusing; therefore, he should be patronized.

Pinetti was the prince of prestidigitateurs of the eighteenth century. His life reads like a romance. After a brilliant, pyrotechnic career, he faded out into darkness. I have gathered my facts concerning him from old French and German brochures. Little or nothing is known about his ancestry, his youth and early experiences.

He may have purposely guarded the secret of his origin, being inordinately boastful. He thoroughly understood how to avail himself of all the arts of the toilet to appear much younger than, according to his contemporaries, he must have been in reality.

It is believed that he first saw the light of day in 1750, in Orbitello, a small fortified town of about three thousand inhabitants, lying in the foothills of what was then the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

He is first heard of while traveling through the provinces of Germany, in 1783. In 1784 he appeared in Paris, where he gave a series of performances, and exhibited several times before the court of Louis XVI with distinguished success. At this time the public showed a marked predilection for all kinds of mystical and inexplicable exhibitions, which had been awakened by the performances of various adventurers, like Cagliostro, St. Germain and Mesmer. Pinetti thoroughly understood how to make the most of this bent of the public mind, and succeeded in setting Paris in ecstasy, as well as becoming himself a model for all contemporary and succeeding necromancers, for a long time. Though without fine or regular features, his physiognomy possessed much distinction; while his manners were excellent. It is probable, however, that the latter were acquired rather than innate; for extremely bad taste is betrayed by his frequently wearing on the stage the uniform of a general, decorated with

numerous orders. This is an oddity with a fatal suggestion of charlatanism. He was given to vaunting, and was in no wise careful to adhere to the truth in communications regarding his magical art. A vicious trait of his character was his readiness to adopt the most contemptible measures to free himself of the rivalry of another; and this unworthy characteristic undoubtedly led to his ultimate downfall.

## II.

Pinetti's repertory was very extended. However interesting it might be to pass in review the whole series of his feats, I must here limit myself to a few, which appear typical of him and of his public.

There was first the wonderful automaton known as "The Grand Sultan," also called "The clever little Turk," which was about forty centimeters in height, and which struck a bell with a hammer, or nodded and shook his head, in answer to questions propounded. "The golden head and the rings" was as follows: In a glass, the bottom of which was covered with coins, a previously shown, massive head was placed. A cover was then placed on the glass. The head answered yes or no to inquiries, or counted numbers by leaping in the glass. In a second glass borrowed rings were laid, which moved in unison with the head, head, as though by sympathy. The "Clever Swan" was put into a vessel of water, and varied its course according to the will of the onlooker. Moreover, when a spectator had drawn a card from a pack of inscribed cards, it spelled the word written thereon, by moving toward the appropriate letters, which were printed on strips of cardboard hung about the vessel.

A kind of sympathetic action is shown in the following experiment. A lighted lamp was deposited on a table. As soon as a spectator, stationed at a considerable distance, blew through a reed, the lamp was immediately extinguished. Another: a live dove was fastened, by means of two ribbons about its neck, to two opposite columns. On the instant when a picture of the dove, or even the shadow of the suspended bird, was pierced by a sword, the dove itself was beheaded, although it had not been disturbed, and the severed and still bleeding head, and the rest

of the body, fell separately to the ground. This experiment, called "Theophrastus Paracelsus," recalls an old superstition, namely, that evil can be wrought upon a person by injury to a picture of him, accompanied by a spoken incantation. It is the so-called "Picture charm."

Fettering and binding experiments were shown, but of a simpler nature than modern ones. To each leg of the magician was fastened a ring, and through each ring an iron chain was passed, its ends locked on a pillar. "The Prisoner" seemed aided by some external power to release himself, for in a very short time he was free from his bonds. More difficult was another experiment, wherein a chain was fastened by a strip of cloth directly about the leg, and secured to the pillar; but here also, a half minute sufficed the "Galley Slave" to free himself of the shackles. The most pleasing was the following trick: Pinetti allowed both thumbs to be tied together with a cord, and his hands, so bound, to be covered with a hat; hardly was this done than he stretched out his right hand, seized a flask of wine and drank to the health of the person who had tied him, and tossed the emptied glass to the ceiling, whence it fell as a ball of finely-cut paper. At the same instant, he allowed the hat to fall, and displayed his hands, still as closely bound as at the beginning of the experiment.\* Also, the well-known trick, in which several borrowed rings are passed over two ribbon bands, the ends of which are knotted together and held by some of the spectators; nevertheless the rings can be drawn off without severing the ribbons. This was hardly new, but merely a variation of a trick described in 1690, in a work by Ozanam, in his *Récréations Mathematiques*, and exhibited by the jugglers of that time under the name of "My Grandmother's Rose Wreath." They made use of small balls, strung on two cords, from which they were withdrawn, notwithstanding that the cords were held by strangers. To-day this trick is explained in most books of games and amusements, which fact does not hinder the public from being quite as much astounded when the feat is performed *à la* Pinetti, with rings or a watch, accompanied by clever patter.

\*There is nothing new under the sun. A Japanese conjurer, named Ten-Ichi, at the present writing, is creating a sensation in our vaudeville theatres with this same thumb-tying trick.

Pinetti's magical bouquet was a very pretty trick. In a vase were placed the dry, leafless stems of a bunch of flowers, tied together. At the magician's command, leaves, flowers and fruit appeared, transforming the bouquet into a thing of beauty; but all its splendor disappeared again at the command of the performer. His feat of the "recovered ring" was as follows: A



PINETTI AND THE DOVE. (From an Old Print.)

ring was borrowed from a lady and fired from a pistol into a casket, which had been previously shown empty and devoid of preparation. When the casket was opened, after the shot was fired, a dove was seen within, holding in its bill the ring. But, in addition, the pretty bird knew precisely the possessor of the ring, for it shook its head in rotation at each lady to whom the trinket did not belong. When the owner appeared, the dove

voluntarily presented the ring to her in its beak. In Naples, where Pinetti's theatre was situated directly on the sea shore, he varied the trick by firing the pistol loaded with the ring out of the window. On opening the casket a large fish was seen, bearing the ring in its mouth.

Another clever experiment was the mechanical bird, which, when set upon a flask, fluttered its wings and whistled any favorite melody called for by the audience, also blowing out a lighted candle and immediately relighting it. It would accomplish these feats just as well when removed from the flask to a table, or when held in the performer's hand upon any part of the stage. The sounds were produced by a "confederate who imitated song birds after Rossignol's method, by aid of the inner skin of an onion in the mouth, and speaking trumpets directed the sounds to whatever position was occupied by the bird." Though the two last described feats were the most celebrated of Pinetti's masterpieces, the most remarkable, without doubt, was the one he called "The stolen shirt." In spite of its somewhat unseemly appearance, it was shown before the king and his family, and consisted of this: A gentleman from the audience, not in league with the performer, came upon the stage and, at Pinetti's request, unfastened the buttons of his shirt at the neck and cuffs, and Pinetti, with only a few movements of his hand drew the shirt from his body, though the gentleman had not removed a single article of his clothing.

Pinetti eventually revealed the process by which this surprising result was obtained. He was moved to do so, because all those who saw the trick performed in the Theatre des Menus-Plaisirs held the conviction that the other party to it was in collusion with him. The public was not to be blamed for this erroneous conclusion, for not only at that time, but much later, many of the astonishing feats of the magician were effected through the complicity of assistants seated among the audience. Such confederates were called by the French, *Compères* and *Compères*, which translated into the vulgar vernacular, stand for "pals," "cronies." These gentlemen brought articles, of which the magician possessed duplicates, and loaned them—apparently as unrelated spectators—when such articles were asked for in

the course of the experiments. Robert-Houdin ended this régime of confederacy. When he asked for the loan of an article, he genuinely borrowed it, and exchanged it for a substitute by sleight of hand. This is the modern method. The following is



PINETTI'S CARD TRICK.

Pinetti's explanation of the shirt trick: "The means of performing this trick are the following—only observing that the clothes of the person whose shirt is to be pulled off be wide and easy: Begin by making him pull off his stock and unbuttoning his

shirt at the neck and sleeves, afterwards tie a little string in the buttonhole of the left sleeve; then, passing your hand behind his back, pull the shirt out of his breeches and slip it over his head; then, pulling it out before in the same manner, you will leave it on his stomach; after that, go to the right hand and pull the sleeve down, so as to have it all out of the arm; the shirt being then all of a heap, as well in the right sleeve as before the stomach, you are to make use of this little string fastened to the buttonhole of the left sleeve to get back the sleeve that must have slipped up, and to pull the whole shirt out that way. To hide your way of operating from the person whom you unshift, and from the assembly, you may cover his head with a lady's cloak, holding a corner of it in your teeth. In order to be more at your ease, you may mount on a chair and do the whole operation under the cloak."

### III.

Pinetti's explanation of the shirt trick was contained in a work entitled *Amusements Physiques, Paris, 1784*. An edition in English of this book was published in London in the same year. It was called: "Amusements in physics, and various entertaining experiments, invented and executed at Paris and the various courts of Europe by the Chevalier M. Jean-Joseph Pinetti Willedale de Merci, Knight of the German Order of Merit of St. Philip, professor of mathematics and natural philosophy, pensioned by the Court of Prussia, patronized by all the Royal Family of France, aggregate of the Royal Academy of Sciences and Belle-Lettres of Bordeaux, etc." As an exposé of conjuring feats in general this work was an imposition on the public. It was intended to mislead the reader. In spite of the high-sounding title of the work, it contained nothing outside of the solution of the "stolen shirt" mystery. There was no explanation of any trick upon which Pinetti set value, but merely experiments already published in preceding books on the juggler's art, and which belonged to a long-past time, consisting mostly of chemical experiments and childish diversions.

This unworthy publication, and Pinetti's custom of speaking of himself as endowed with preternatural powers, aroused an adversary in the person of M. Henri Decremps, of the Museum of Paris, an accomplished and enthusiastic lover of the art of magic. From him appeared a book entitled, *La Magie blanche dévoilée*, Paris, 1784, addressed, as he declares in the preface, not to the great public, since "the world loves to be deceived, and would rather believe the fairy tales of the imposter than the unvarnished truth of his opponent," but to the real lovers of an entertaining art. As this work set forth the real explanation of Pinetti's wonders, one may imagine what reception it met with from him and his admiring public. Characteristic of Pinetti is the manner in which he sought revenge on Decremps. In one of his performances he deplored the fact that an ignorant imposter, solely with the intent of injuring him (Pinetti), sought to reveal mysteries which his intelligence was insufficient to grasp. All knew to whom he referred, who had the slightest knowledge of Decremps. And what now ensued? Hardly had Pinetti finished speaking, when a shabbily-dressed and unprepossessing individual arose, assailed Pinetti with abuse and bade him take care, he would be fully exposed. The audience, indignant at the disturbance of an amusing performance, jeered the man from whom it proceeded, and made preparation to expel the poor devil. Here intervened, however, the "good" Pinetti. In conciliatory, kindly fashion, he accompanied his assailant to the door, ostentatiously presenting him also with several louis d'or as indemnification for the harshness shown him.

Needless to explain, the expelled intruder was not the author of the book in question, but genuinely a "poor devil" who played his part in the comedy, for a money consideration. However, Decremps was an able man, who could act with as much shrewdness as energy. In 1785 he followed his first book with a second, explaining Pinetti's newest tricks, the self-playing organ, artificial snakes and birds, chess-playing automatons, ascending balloons in human shape, perpetual motion, learned animals, automatic flute playing, etc. The handling of the topic is much more thorough than in the first volume, and the matter interestingly set forth. It is in the form of letters of travel; the author

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*L'Art de faire les Portraits à la Silhouette en  
Miniature à la manière angloise, à l'aide  
de la Chambre obscure.*

Chap. VIII, pag. 55.



**Il a su démasquer, dans ses heureux Écrits,  
Du grand art de jongler les trop nombreux Apôtres.  
Il eut des envieux, mais encor plus d'amis,  
Et mérita d'avoir & les uns & les autres.**

*Par M. Sal \*\*\*.*

M. DECREMPS

in company with a Mr. Hill, an Englishman, traverses distant lands, where remarkable and astonishing things are met with, and the causes and construction which bring about their wonderful results, are ascertained and explained.

They reach the Cape of Good Hope, where, amid a savage population, with many arts of refined civilization, they encounter a wizard, who, in a bombastic declaration, extols his own wonder-working powers. In the course of the narrative these feats are described and their operation explained. The behavior of the wizard is amusingly depicted. How strenuously he denies the truth of the solution of his wonders found by the strangers; how he endeavors, by means of every artifice, to hoodwink the public; how he first strives, through cunning and bribery, then through abuse and injury, to rid himself of his dangerous adversaries—in all this is Pinetti's character so intimately pictured that we cannot err in supposing this entire portion of the book directed solely against him. And what name does he give the wizard? He calls him "Pilferer." Decidedly, Decremps could be severe.

These books were translated into English in 1785, and published as a single volume, under the title of *The Conjuror Unmasked*, etc.

Pinetti, who was an original genius, sought to overcome the effects of Decremps' revelations in other ways besides chicanery. He invented new illusions, performed his old tricks with greater dash and brilliancy, and added new appointments to his *mise en scène*, to dazzle and overcome the spectators. His patter was unceasing and convincing. But now was heard the distant thunder of the approaching social upheaval—the French Revolution. The political horizon was full of black clouds. The people of Paris began to desert the theatres for clubs and cafés, there to enter upon political discussions. Pinetti, seeing the audiences of his Temple of Magic dwindling away, packed up his apparatus and went to England, which is the immediate aim of all fugitives from France.

During his stay in London he made the following announcement in the newspapers: "The Chevalier Pinetti and his consort will exhibit most wonderful, stupendous and absolutely inimit-

able, mechanical, physical and philosophical pieces, which his recent deep scrutiny in these sciences, and assiduous exertion, have enabled him to invent and construct; among which Chevalier Pinetti will have the special honor and satisfaction of exhibiting various experiments, of new discovery, no less curious than seemingly incredulous, particularly that of Mme. Pinetti being seated in one of the front boxes with a handkerchief over her eyes and guessing at everything imagined and proposed to her by any person in the company." Here we have the first mention of the "Second-Sight" trick, which Robert-Houdin re-invented sixty-one years later, and which Robert Heller, not many years ago, by using electricity combined with verbal signals, made into such an astonishing feat of magic. The teachings of Mesmer and the so-called sorcery of Cagliostro, evidently suggested the idea of this pretended clairvoyance to Pinetti. Truly was the Chevalier an original and creative genius. His repertoire consisted almost entirely of his own inventions, and eclipsed those of contemporary conjurers. His rope-tying experiments were the prototypes for the cabinet evolutions of modern mediums.

## IV.

Late in the year 1769, Pinetti appeared in Hamburg and exhibited with great success in the "Drillhaus," where Degabriel and Philadelphia had played previously. From there he went to the principal cities of Germany and arrived at Berlin, where, in the then "Doebbelin'schen Theatre," in the Behrenstrasse, he produced his "Amusements Physiques," and soon became the avowed idol of the public.

In August, 1796, he appeared in Hamburg, at the French Theatre, on the Drenklehn, where his receipts were considerable. Such was not the case, however, in Altona, whose inhabitants were distinguished by lack of interest in any manifestation of his art. He gave there three exhibitions, which terminated with two empty houses. In Bremen, whither he next turned, the public was even more indifferent than in Altona, so that he abandoned the intention of performing there, returned to Berlin and there remained for some time.

Pinetti derived large profits from his entertainments. His entrance fee was by no means low. In Hamburg and Berlin, for instance, the price of the best places was a thaler—equivalent at present values to about ten marks, \$2.50. Pinetti saw carefully to the comfort and pleasure of his patrons, and heightened the effect of his skill by every available means. The eye was gratified by the splendor of the scenic accessories. In the middle of the stage, upon a superb carpet, stood two massive tables, which served in performance of the experiments. They were covered with scarlet cloths, bordered with broad stripes of dark velvet, richly embroidered in gold and silver. Further in the background stood a larger and a smaller table, with the same decorations, and with relatively slender and elaborately carved legs. Close to the rear of the stage, with a cover extending to the carpet, was a very long table which was set forth with magnificent candelabra and brilliant apparatus. The above-mentioned tables were not moved from their places. In the middle of the stage, hung from the ceiling an immense chandelier of crystal, with countless candles. The artist made his entrance and exit through silken hangings.

As in Paris, so also in Berlin, Pinetti found an adversary, in the person of Kosmann, professor of physics, who in daily and periodical publications sought to explain Pinetti's experiments. These elucidations were collected, bound together and published in Berlin in the year 1797. The English translation of the title is as follows: *Chevalier Pinetti's Recreations in Physics, or Explanation of His Tricks*. As with Decremps, so fared it with Kosmann. His explanations did not meet with public accord, and the contemporary press denominated the two authors "who sought to belittle Pinetti's skill," as mere apprentices compared with the latter, and their expositions "shallow and unsatisfactory." Naturally! The laity invariably form a false conception of the nature of the art of magic. They suppose the most complicated mechanism in the apparatus which the artist uses, and overestimate the manual skill of the performer; and when their ability is insufficient to explain matters after their own fashion, they prefer to endow the performer with preternatural power rather than accept the "shallow" elucidations of "igno-

rant" expounders. They do not realize that every trick is only what the artist is able to make it, and that the simplest illusion may take an imposing aspect through the accessories thrown about it and the manner in which it is presented.

Whatever opinion the laity might have of these works, their value was in no wise lessened for the instructed. Robert-Houdin, an incontestable connoisseur, as well as a "classical" witness, calls the work of M. Decremps, *White Magic Unveiled*—the first edition of which could not have been unknown to the Berlin professor—"an excellent work."

## V.

At the beginning of the carnival of 1798, Pinetti appeared in Naples, and saw the whole city crowding to his performances.

Among the constant visitors to his theatre (on the strand) was numbered a young French nobleman, Count de Grisy, who had settled in Naples as a physician, and was a welcome guest in the most distinguished circles of the town. A passionate lover of the art of magic, he succeeded in finding the key to a large portion of Pinetti's experiments, and amused himself in the closest circles of his intimates, by repeating them. His ability became generally known, and gained for him a kind of celebrity; he was invited to perform in the most aristocratic salons, but through modesty seldom accepted.

Finally his fame came to the ears of Pinetti, who was so much the more chagrined because of the fact that people of fashion, who had at first thronged his theatre, now were deserting him. Nevertheless, he listened with apparent pleasure to the reports given him of De Grisy's skill, and sought to gain the acquaintance of the young physician. He frankly proffered his friendship, initiated De Grisy into his mysteries, and showed him the arrangement of his stage. The familiarity which Pinetti openly and intentionally displayed towards him might have displeased the young man under other circumstances, but his passion for magic and the persuasive eloquence which Pinetti employed to arouse his ambition, made him blind to conduct, which,

in the mind of one more versed in men, might have awakened suspicion.

So Pinetti succeeded, finally, in overcoming De Grisy's timidity in regard to a public appearance. He repeated the most flattering assurances of the latter's skill, and urged him to give a performance for the benefit of the poor of Naples. He would, declared Pinetti, attract a more distinguished audience than he himself could hope to do; and so, De Grisy, who had already earned the gratitude of the poor, would become their greatest benefactor in all the city. Pinetti would himself make all previous arrangements most carefully, and would, moreover, hold himself in readiness, behind the scenes, to come to the young performer's assistance, if required. De Grisy at last gave reluctant consent. Fortune seemed to favor him, moreover, for the King signified his intention to attend in company with his entire court.

August 20, 1798, this extraordinary exhibition took place. The house was packed. The royal family received the young French emigrant with tokens of favor and sympathy. De Grisy, confident of success, was in the happiest mood, but in his very first experiment a bitter disillusion awaited him. A secret confederate, posted by Pinetti, had loaned a ring to carry out the already-described trick, "The Recovered Ring," which was properly found in the mouth of the great fish. Conscious of the success of this loudly-applauded feat, De Grisy bowed his thanks, when an angry remonstrance was heard from the person who had loaned the ring. This man declared that in lieu of his costly gold ring, set with diamonds, there had been returned to him a trumpery imitation set with ordinary glass stones. A long and painful discussion ensued, and De Grisy owed it only to his tact that he finally extricated himself from the affair. He was not clear himself as to whether the ring had somehow been changed, or whether the assistant played a role from some secret motive.

He proceeded to the performance of his next experiment with less concern, in that no secret confederate was needed. He approached the King's box and asked him to do him the honor of drawing a card from a pack he tendered. The King complied with much graciousness; but scarcely had he looked at it than

he flung it to the ground with every mark of his displeasure. De Grisy, confounded, picked up the card, and read on it a scandalous insult to the king, in Pinetti's handwriting! An attempt to explain and clear himself was checked by an imperative gesture from the King. The betrayed man, who now understood the situation, distracted with rage, rushed behind the scenes with the intent to kill his deceitful friend. Like a maniac he traversed every portion of the house, but the Chevalier Pinetti had disappeared, as though the earth had swallowed him! Wherever De Grisy now showed himself, he was received with jeers, hisses and insults from his audience, until he fell senseless and was borne by servants to his house. After his rival's removal, Pinetti appeared as though by chance; whereupon several persons in the secret called on him to continue the performance, to which he courteously acceded, and gained enthusiastic plaudits.

During a violent fever which ensued, De Grisy constantly called in his delirium for revenge on Pinetti; but the latter quitted Naples soon after the occurrence. Poor De Grisy was socially and professionally tabooed by the aristocracy of Naples. Pinetti's revenge seemed complete.

Though De Grisy thoroughly comprehended the contemptible ruse of his opponent, he was long in uncertainty how to punish him. His first impulse was to challenge the magician to fight a duel, but that idea he rejected. Pinetti was not worthy of such an honor. For the purpose of completing his restoration to health, De Grisy passed some time in the quiet of the country, and here the thought occurred to him to fight his betrayer with his own weapons, and, in this contest, to either conquer or wholly abandon all ideas of revenge. He set himself for half a year to the most assiduous study, in order to attain perfection in the art of magic, not merely equal to Pinetti's, but superior to it. He improved on many of his rival's experiments, invented new ones, and expended his entire fortune in providing apparatus and decorations which should cast into the shade Pinetti's superb appointments.

And now issued De Grisy forth to a duel, bloodless, it is true, but none the less a struggle to the death.

He learned that Pinetti had, in the meantime, visited the principal cities of central Italy, and had just left Lucca with the view of visiting Bologna next; later Modena, Parma, Piacenza, etc. Without loss of time, De Grisy took his way to Modena, in order to forestall his rival there, and debar him from any further performances. The latter had already caused the announcement of his forthcoming entertainments to be spread over the city, and the Modena journals had widely advertised the speedy coming of the wonder worker, when suddenly the exhibitions of the "Count de Grisy, the French escamoteur," were announced. The people crowded the house from top to bottom. De Grisy's success was unparalleled. Then, as the date for Pinetti's appearance drew near, he left the town and went to Parma. Pinetti had no faith in De Grisy's success, and installed himself in the same theatre which the latter had lately quitted, in reliance on his own celebrity. But here began that humiliating experience which was henceforth to be his lot. The town was sated with this species of entertainment, and the Chevalier's house was empty. Still, accustomed to take the highest place, he would not yield to a "novice." Accordingly, he directed his steps to Parma immediately, and established himself in a theatre just opposite to De Grisy's. In vain! He had the mortification of seeing his house deserted, while his rival's was constantly filled. Nevertheless, Pinetti would not yield, but wheresoever De Grisy went he followed.

Thus were visited, one after another, Piacenza, Cremona, Mantua, Vicenza, Padua, and Venice, whose walls witnessed the embittered strife of the two rivals, until Pinetti, whose most zealous supporters were turning recreant, could blind himself no longer to the fact that he had lost the game which he and De Grisy had been playing. He closed his theatre and betook himself to Russia.

For a short time it seemed as though Fortune would indemnify him for his ill luck. But, after having for so long showered her favors on him, it now appeared that she had finally and definitely turned her back upon him. Long and severe illness exhausted not only his vigor, but the slender means he had saved from shipwreck. Pinetti fell into the most abject want. A



nobleman in the village of Bartitschoff in Volhynien took him in from pity. And thus, at the turn of the century, ended the life of this richly gifted artist, who was so wanting in nobility of spirit.

The extraordinary story of Pinetti's downfall was told to Robert-Houdin by De Grisy himself, and is given at length in Houdin's memoirs. Pinetti had married a Russian girl, the daughter of a carriage-maker. By her he had two children. He was hardly fifty when he died. Etienne-Gaspard Robertson when traveling in Russia met the widow Pinetti at Bialistock. She showed him her husband's cabinet of physics and endeavored to sell it to him, but he did not purchase it. However, he bought a medallion, set with diamonds, and a ring which the Czar had presented to Pinetti. Says Robertson, in his memoirs: "Pinetti had the audacity to ask the Russian Emperor to stand god-father for his children at the baptismal font, and the Emperor actually consented."

To me this seems nothing wonderful.

Why should not the greatest conjurer of the age ask a favor of the greatest autocrat? Both were sovereigns in their particular domain.

## CAGLIOSTRO—A STUDY IN CHARLATANISM.

"Mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur."—*Latin Proverb.*

"The pseudo-mystic, who deceives the world because he knows that the world wishes to be deceived, becomes an attractive subject for psychological analysis."—HUGO MÜNSTERBERG: *Psychology and Life.*

"Unparalleled Cagliostro! Looking at thy so attractively decorated private theatre, wherein thou actedst and livedst, what hand but itches to draw aside thy curtain; overhaul thy pasteboards, paint-pots, paper-mantles, stage-lamps, and turning the whole inside out, find *thee* in the middle thereof!"—CARLYLE: *Miscellaneous Essays.*

### I.

In the summer of 1893, I was in Paris, partly on business, partly on pleasure. In the *Figaro* one day, shortly after my arrival, I read about the marvelous exhibitions of magic of M. Caroly, who was attracting crowds to his *séances diaboliques* at the Capucine Theatre of the Isola Brothers. I went to see the nineteenth-century necromancer exhibit his marvels. I saw some very clever illusions performed during the evening, but nothing that excited my especial interest as a devotee of the weird and wonderful, until the prestidigitateur came to his *pièce de résistance*—the Mask of Balsamo. That aroused my flagging attention. M. Caroly brought forward a small table, undraped, which he placed in the center aisle of the theatre; and then passed around for examination the mask of a man, very much resembling a death-mask, but unlike that ghastly *memento mori* in the particulars that it was exquisitely modeled in wax and artistically colored.

"Messieurs et mesdames," said the professor of magic and mystery, "this mask is a perfect likeness of Joseph Balsamo, Count de Cagliostro, the famous sorcerer of the eighteenth cen-

ture. It is a reproduction of a death-mask which is contained in the secret museum of the Vatican at Rome. Behold! I lay the mask upon this table in your midst. Ask any question you please and it will respond."

The mask rocked to and fro with weird effect at the bidding of the conjurer, rapping out frequent answers to queries put by the spectators. It was an ingenious electrical trick.\* Being already acquainted with the secret of the surprising experiment in natural magic, I evinced no emotion at the extraordinary behavior of the mask. But I was intensely interested in the mask itself. Was it indeed a true likeness of the great Cagliostro, the prince of charlatans? I repaired to the manager's office at the close of the *soirée magique*, and sought an introduction to M. Caroly.

"Is monsieur an aspiring amateur who wishes to take lessons in legerdemain?"

"No!" I replied.

"Pardon! Then monsieur is desirous of purchasing the secrets of some of the little *jeux*?"

I replied as before in the negative. The manager shrugged his shoulders, toyed with his ponderous watch-chain, and elevated his eyebrows inquiringly.

"I simply wish to ascertain whether the mask of Balsamo was really modeled from a genuine death-mask of the old-world wizard."

"Monsieur, I can answer that question," said the theatrical man, "without an appeal to the artist who performed this evening. It was taken from a likeness of the eighteenth-century sorcerer, not a death-mask as stated, but a rare old medallion cast in the year 1785. Unfortunately this is not in our possession."

\*"The secret of the trick is as follows: That part of the wood which forms the chin is replaced by a small strip of iron, which is painted the same color as the mask, so that it cannot be seen; an electro-magnet is let into the top of the table, so that the cores shall be opposite the strip of iron when the mask is laid upon the table. Contact is made by means of a push-button somewhere in the side scenes; the wires run under the stage, and connection is made through the legs of the table when the legs are set on the fore-ordained place."—Hopkins' *Magic*, etc.

I thanked the manager for his information. The story about the death-mask in the possession of the Vatican was simply a part of the prestidigitateur's patter, but everything is permissible in a conjuring séance.

I went home to the little hotel where I lodged in the historic Rue de Beaune, a stone's throw from the house where Voltaire died. In my bedroom, over the carved oak mantel, was a curious old mirror set in a tarnished gilt frame, a relic of the eighteenth century. Said I to myself: "Would this were a ghost-glass, a veritable mirror of Nostradamus, wherein I might conjure up a phantasmagoria of that vanished Paris of long ago." Possessed with this fantastic idea, I retired to rest, closed in the crimson curtains of the antique four-poster, and was soon wafted into the land of dreams. Strange visions filled my brain. In the mirror I seemed to see Cagliostro searching for the "elixir of life," in the laboratory of the Hotel de Strasbourg, while near him stood the Cardinal de Rohan, breathlessly awaiting the results of the mystic operation. The red glow from the alchemist's furnace illumined the great necromancer with a coppery splendor.

Cagliostro! Cagliostro! I was pursued all the next day, and for weeks afterward, with visions of the enchanter. "Ah, wretched mask of Balsamo," I said to myself, "why have you bewitched me thus with your false oleaginous smile?" I took to haunting the book-stalls and antiquarian shops of the Quai Voltaire, in the hope of picking up some old medallion or rare print of the arch-quack. The second-hand literature of the world may be found here. Amid the flotsam and jetsam of old books tossed upon this inhospitable shore of literary endeavor many a precious Elzevir or Aldus has been picked up. My labors were not in vain. I was fortunate in discovering a quaint little volume, the life of Cagliostro, translated from the Italian work printed under the auspices of the Apostolic Chamber, Rome, 1790. It was entitled *Vie de Joseph Balsamo, Connu Sous le Nom de Comte Cagliostro. Traduite d'après l'original italien, imprimé à la Chambre Apostolique; enrichie de Notes curieuses, et ornée de son Portrait. Paris et Strasbourg, 1791.* The frontispiece was an engraved portrait of Cagliostro. Yes, here

was the great magician staring at me from out the musty, faded pages of a quaint old chronicle. A world of cunning lay revealed in the depths of his bold, gleaming eyes. His thick lips wore a smile of Luciferian subtlety. Here, indeed, was a study for Lavater. Here was the biography of the famous sorcerer of the old régime, the prince of charlatans, who foretold the fall of the Bastille, the bosom friend of the Cardinal de Rohan, and founder of the Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry. Fascinated with the subject of magic and magicians, I visited the Bibliothèque Nationale and dipped into the literature on Cagliostro. Subsequently, at the British Museum, I examined the rare brochures and old files of the *Courrier de l'Europe* for information concerning the incomparable necromancer, who made use of hypnotism, and, like Mesmer, performed many strange feats of pseudo-magic, and made numerous cures of diseases which baffled the medicos of the time.\*

Goethe\*\* and Catharine II. wrote plays about him; George Sand introduced him into her novel, "The Countess of Rudolstadt;" Alexander Dumas made him the hero of several romances; Scribe, St. Georges, and Adam in the year 1844 brought out "Cagliostro," a comic opera in three acts, which was successfully performed at the Opéra Comique, Paris; Alexander Dumas  *fils*  wrote a drama in five acts called "Joseph Balsamo" which was produced at the Odéon, March 18, 1878; and Thomas Carlyle philosophized concerning him.

To understand Cagliostro, one must understand the period in which he lived and acted his strange world-drama, its philosophical and religious background. The arch-enchanter appeared on this mortal scene when the times were "out of joint." It was the latter part of that strange, romantic eighteenth century of scepticism and credulity. The old world like a huge Cheshire cheese was being nibbled away from within, until little but the

\*"Der Gros-Cophta" (a comedy in five acts). *Goethe's Werke*, vol. 18, Stuttgart, 1868.

\*\*A superb bibliography of Cagliostro is to be found in "Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel," 1904, Nos. 210-212, and 214 (Sept. 9-12, 14), pp. 7488-92, 7524-30, 7573-75. This publication is to be found in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

mind was left to tell the tale. The rotten fabric of French society, in particular, was about to tumble down in the sulphurous flames of the Revolution, and the very people who were to suffer most in the calamity were doing their best to assist in the process of social and political disintegration. The dogmas of the Church were bitterly assailed by learned men. But the more sceptical the age, the more credulity extant. Man begins by denying, and then doubts his doubts. Charles Kingsley says: "And so it



From a painting in the Versailles  
Historical Gallery



After an engraving which served as a frontis-  
piece of Balsamo's *Life*, published in 1781

Joseph Balsamo, Known as Count Cagliostro.

befell, that this eighteenth century, which is usually held to be the most 'materialistic' of epochs, was in fact a most 'spiritualistic' one." The soil was well fertilized for the coming of Cagliostro, the sower of superstition. Every variety of mysticism appealed to the imaginative mind. There were societies of Illuminati, Rosicrucians, and Alchemists.

Speaking of the great charlatan, the Anglo-Indian essayist Greeven in an article published a few years ago in the *Calcutta*

*Review* writes: "It is not enough to say that Cagliostro posed as a magician, or stood forth as the apostle of a mystic religion. After all, in its mild way, our own generation puts on its evening dress to worship at the feet of mediums, whose familiar spirits enable them to wriggle out of ropes in cupboards, or to project cigarette papers from the ceiling [*à la* Madame Blavatsky]. We ride our hobby, however, only when the whim seizes us, and, as soon as it wearies, we break it in pieces and fling it aside

## MEMOIRE

POUR

LE COMTE DE CAGLIOSTRO,

ACCUSE;

CONTRE

M. LE PROCUREUR-GENÉRAL,

ACCUSATEUR,

En présence de M. le Cardinal DE  
ROHAN, de la Comtesse DE LA  
MOTTE, et autres Co-Accusés.

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M. DE CAGLIOSTRO NE DEMANDE QUE TRAN-  
QUILLITÉ ET SURETÉ; L'HOSPITALITÉ  
LES LUI ASSURE. *EXTRAIT d'une Lettre écrite*  
*par M. le Comte de VERGENNES, Ministre des*  
*Affaires Etrangères, à M. GÉRARD, Prêtre de*  
*Strasbourg, le 13 Mars 1782.*

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TITLE-PAGE OF THE DEFENSE OF CAGLIOSTRO.

## VIE

DE JOSEPH BALSAMO,

CONNU SOUS LE NOM

DE

COMTE CAGLIOSTRO,

*Extraite de la Procédure instruite*  
*contre lui à Rome, en 1790,*

Traduite d'après l'original italien,  
imprimé à la Chambre Apostolique;  
enrichie de Notes curieuses, et ornée  
de son Portrait.

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A PARIS,

Chez ONFROY, libraire, rue Saint-Victor, n°. 11.

ET A STRASBOURG,

Chez JEAN-GEORGE TREUTTEL, libraire.

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TITLE-PAGE OF THE LIFE OF CAGLIOSTRO.

with a laugh. But Cagliostro impressed himself deeply on the history of his time. He flashed on the world like a meteor. He carried it by storm. Princes and nobles thronged to his 'magic operations.' They prostrated themselves before him for hours. His horses and his coaches and his liveries rivaled a king's in magnificence. He was offered, and refused, a ducal throne. No less illustrious a writer than the Empress of Russia deemed him a worthy subject of her plays. Goethe made him the hero of a famous drama. A French Cardinal and an English Lord were his bosom companions. In an age which arrogated

to itself the title of *the philosophic*, the charm of his eloquence drew thousands to his lodges, in which he preached the mysteries of his *Egyptian ritual*, as revealed to him by the Grand Kophta under the shadow of the pyramids."

## II.

And now for a brief review of his life. Joseph Balsamo, the son of Peter Balsamo and Felicia Braconieri, both of humble extraction, was born at Palermo, on the eighth day of June, 1743. He received the rudiments of an education at the Seminary of St. Roche, Palermo. At the age of thirteen, according to the Inquisition biographer, he was intrusted to the care of the Father-General of the Benfratelli, who carried him to the Convent of that Order at Cartagirone. There he put on the habit of a novice, and, being placed under the tuition of the apothecary, he learned from him the first principles of chemistry and medicine. He proved incorrigible, and was expelled from the monastery in disgrace. Then began a life of dissipation in the city of Palermo. He was accused of forging theatre-tickets and a will. Finally he had to flee the city for having duped a goldsmith named Marano of sixty pieces of gold, by promising to assist him in unearthing a buried treasure by magical means. The superstitious Marano entered a cavern situated in the environs of Palermo, according to instructions given to him by the enchanter, and discovered, not a chest full of gold, but a crowd of Balsamo's confederates, who, disguised as infernal spirits, administered to him a terrible castigation. Furious at the deception, the goldsmith vowed to assassinate the pretended sorcerer. Balsamo, however, took wing to Messina, where he fell in with a strolling mountebank and alchemist named Althotas, or Altotas, who spoke a variety of languages. They traveled to Alexandria in Egypt, and finally brought up at the island of Malta. Pinto, the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta, was a searcher after the philosopher's stone, an enthusiastic alchemist. He extended a warm reception to the two adventurers, and took them under his patronage. They remained for some time at Malta, working in the laboratory of the deluded



Pinto. Eventually Althotas died, and Balsamo went to Naples, afterwards to Rome, where he married a beautiful girdle-maker, named Lorenza Feliciani. Together with a swindler calling himself the Marchese d'Agliata, he had a series of disreputable adventures in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Unmasked at one place, he fled in hot haste to another.

In 1776 he arrived in London. He had assumed various aliases during the course of his life, but now he called himself the "Conte di Cagliostro." The title of nobility was assumed, but the name of Cagliostro was borrowed from an uncle on his mother's side of the house, Joseph Cagliostro, of Messina, who was an agent or factor of the Prince of Villafranca. His beautiful wife called herself the "Countess Serafina Feliciani." Cagliostro announced himself as a worker of wonders, especially in medicine. He carried about two mysterious substances—a red powder, known as his "Materia Prima," with which he transmuted baser metals into gold, and his "Egyptian Wine," with which he prolonged life.

He dropped hints that he was the son of the Grand-Master Pinto of Malta and the Princess of Trebizonde. He foretold the lucky numbers in a lottery and got into difficulty with a gang of swindlers, which caused him to flee from England to avoid being imprisoned. While in London he picked up, at a second-hand book-stall, the mystic writings of an obscure spiritist, one George Coston, "which suggested to him the idea of the Egyptian ritual"; and he got himself initiated into a masonic lodge. Henri d'Alm  ras (*Cagliostro: la Franc-Ma  onnerie et l'Occultisme au XVIII si  cle, Paris, 1904*) states authoritatively that the famous charlatan received the masonic degrees in the Esp  rance Lodge, April 12, 1777. This lodge, composed mainly of French and Italian residents in London, held its sessions at the King's Head Tavern (Gerard Street). It was attached to the Continental Masonic order of the Higher Observance, which was supposed to be a continuation and perfection of the ancient association of the Knights Templars. According to Alm  ras, Cagliostro was initiated under the name of Joseph Cagliostro, Colonel of the 3d regiment of Brandenburg. On June 2, the Grand Lodge of London gave him his masonic patent, which is to

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be found in the collection of autographs of the Marquis de Chateaugiron, V. Catalogue, Paris, 1851. Cagliostro is regarded as the greatest masonic imposter of the world. His pretensions were bitterly repudiated by the English members of the fraternity, and many of the Continental lodges. But the fact remains that he made thousands of dupes. As Grand Master of the Egyptian Rite he leaped at once into fame. His swindling operations were now conducted on a gigantic scale. He had the entrée into the best society. According to him, freemasonry was founded by Enoch and Elias. It was open to both sexes. Its present form, especially with regard to the exclusion of women, is a corruption. The true form was preserved only by the Grand Kophtha, or High Priest of the Egyptians. By him it was revealed to Cagliostro. The votaries of any religion are admissible, subject to these conditions, (1) that they believe in the existence of a God; (2) that they believe in the immortality of the soul; and (3) that they have been initiated into common Masonry. The candidate must swear an oath of secrecy, and obedience to the Secret Superiors. It is divided into the usual three grades of Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Mastermason.

In this system he promised his followers "to conduct them to *perfection*, by means of a *physical and moral regeneration*; to enable them by the former (or physical) to find the *prime matter*, or Philosopher's Stone, and the *acacia*, which consolidates in man the forces of the most vigorous youth and renders him immortal; and by the latter (or moral) to procure them a Pantagon, which should restore man to his primitive state of innocence, lost by original sin."

Cagliostro declared Moses, Elias and Christ to be the Secret Superiors of the Order, because having "attained to such perfection in masonry that, exalted into higher spheres, they are able to create fresh worlds for the glory of the Lord. Each is still the head of a secret community."

No wonder the Egyptian Rite became popular among lovers of the marvelous, because it promised its votaries, who should attain to perfection, or adeptship, the power of transmuting baser metals into gold; prolonging life indefinitely by means of

WAGNER: BMA:

an elixir; communing with the spirits of the dead; and many other necromantic feats and experiments.

The meetings of the Egyptian Lodges were in reality spiritualistic séances. The medium was a young boy (*pupille*) or young girl (*colombe*) in the state of virgin innocence, "to whom power was given over the seven spirits that surround the throne of the divinity, and preside over the seven planets." The Colombe would kneel in front of a globe of clarified water which was placed upon a table covered with a black cloth, and Cagliostro would summon the angels of the spheres to enter the globe, whereupon the youthful clairvoyant would behold the visions presented to view, and describe events transpiring in distant places. "It would be hard," says Count Beugnot, "to believe that such scenes could have taken place in France at the end of the eighteenth century; yet they aroused great interest among people of importance in the Court and the town."

In the mysticism of the twentieth century the above-mentioned form of divination is known as "crystal gazing," though the medium employed is usually a ball of rock crystal, and not a globe of water such as Cagliostro generally used. Occultism classes all such experiments under the head of *magic mirrors*. The practice is very ancient. The Regent d'Orléans of France experimented with the magic mirror, as Saint Simon records. The great traveler, Lane, speaks of such divination among the modern Egyptians by means of ink held in the palm of the hand. Mirrors of ivory, metal, and wood coated with gypsum have been used. As Andrew Lang puts it: "There is, in short, a chain of examples, from the Greece of the fourth century B. C., to the cases observed by Dr. Mayo and Dr. Gregory in the middle of the nineteenth century, and to those which Mrs. De Morgan wished to explain by 'spiritualism.'" In the opera "Parsifal" by Richard Wagner, the necromancer, Klingsor, sees the approach of the young knight in a magic mirror. In the Middle Ages the use of these mirrors was well known. Deeply imbued with the spirit of mediævalism, Wagner properly equipped the magician of his sublime opera with the mirror.

Max Dessoir, the German psychologist, writes as follows concerning the magic mirror (*Monist*, Vol. I, No. 1):

"The phenomena produced by the agency of the magic mirror with regard to their contents proceed from the realm of the subconsciousness; and that with regard to their *form* they belong to the category of hallucinations. . . . Hallucinations, the production of which are facilitated by the fixation of shining surfaces, do not occur with all persons; and there may be a kernel of truth in the tradition which designates women and children as endowed with especial capacities in this respect. The investigations of Fechner upon the varying vividness of after-images; the statistics of Galton upon hallucinatory phantasms in artists; and the extensive statistical work of the Society for Psychical Research, appear to point to a connection of this character. . . . Along with the inner process the outward form of the hallucination requires a brief explanation. The circumstance, namely, which lends magic-mirror phenomena their salient feature, is the sensory reproduction of the images that have sprung up from the subconsciousness. The subterranean ideas produced do not reach the surface as thoughts, but as pseudo-perceptions."

Cagliostro sometimes made use of a metallic mirror. This fact we have on the authority of the Countess du Barry, the frail favorite of Louis XV. When the "Well Beloved" went the way of dusty death, the charming Countess divided her years of banishment from the glories of the Court at her Chateau of Luciennes and her houses in Paris and Versailles. She relates that on one occasion the Cardinal de Rohan paid her a visit. During the conversation the subject of Mesmer and magnetism was discussed.

"My dear Countess," said the Cardinal, "the magnetic séances of Mesmer are not to be compared with the magic of my friend the Count de Cagliostro. He is a genuine Rosicrucian, who holds communion with the elemental spirits. He is able to pierce the veil of the future by his necromantic power. Permit me to introduce him to you."

The curiosity of the Countess was excited, and she consented to receive the illustrious sorcerer at her home. The next day the Cardinal came, accompanied by Cagliostro. The magician was magnificently dressed, but not altogether in good taste. Diamonds sparkled on his breast and upon his fingers. The

knob of his walking-stick was incrustated with precious stones. Madame du Barry, however, was much struck with the power of his bold, gleaming eyes. She realized that he was no ordinary charlatan. After discussing the question of sorcery, Cagliostro took from the breast pocket of his coat a leather case which he handed to the Countess, saying that it contained a magic mirror wherein she might read the events of the past and future. "If the vision be not to your liking," he remarked, impressively, "do not blame me. You use the mirror at your own risk."

She opened the case and saw a "metallic glass in an ebony frame, ornamented with a variety of magical characters in gold and silver." Cagliostro recited some cabalistic words, and bade her gaze intently into the glass. She did so, and in a few minutes was overcome with fright and fainted away.

Such is the story as related by Du Barry in her memoirs, which have been recently edited by Prof. Leon Vallée, librarian of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

She gives us no clew as to the vision witnessed by her in the magic glass. She says she afterwards refused to receive Cagliostro under any circumstances.

What are we to believe concerning this remarkable story? We might possibly conjecture that she saw in the mirror a phantasmagoria of the guillotine, and beheld her blonde head "sneeze into the basket," and held up to public execration. Coming events cast their shadows before.

But all this is mere fancy, "midsummer madness," as the Bard of Avon has it.

God alone knows the future. Wisely has it been veiled to us.

Possibly Madame la Comtesse from her subliminal consciousness conjured up an hallucination of the loathsome death by smallpox of her royal lover, at whose corpse even the "night men" of Versailles recoiled with horror. Telepathy from Cagliostro may have played a part in inducing the vision. Ah, who knows! We leave the problem to the psychologists for solution.

## III.

From England Cagliostro went to the Hague, where he inaugurated a lodge of female masons, over which his wife presided as Grand Mistress. Throughout Holland he was received by the lodges with masonic honors—beneath “arches of steel.” He discoursed volubly upon magic and masonry to enraptured thousands. In March, 1779, he made his appearance at Mitau,\* in the Baltic Provinces, which he regarded as the stepping-stone to St. Petersburg. He placed great hope in Catherine II of Russia—“the avowed champion of advanced thought.” He hoped to promulgate widely his new and mysterious religious cult in the land of the Czars, with all the pomp and glamour of the East. The nobility of Kurland received him with open arms. Some of them offered to place him on the ducal throne, so he claimed. He wisely refused the offer. Cagliostro eventually made a fiasco at Mitau and left in hot haste. In St. Petersburg his stay was as short. Catherine II was too clever a woman to be his dupe. She ordered the charlatan to leave Russia, which he forthwith did. Prospects of Siberia doubtless hastened his departure. In May, 1780, he turned up at Warsaw. A leading prince lodged him in his palace. Here Cagliostro “paraded himself in the white shoes and red heels of a noble.” His spirit séances were not a success. He chose as his clairvoyant a little girl, eight years of age. After pouring oil into her hands, he closed her in a room, the door of which was hung with a black curtain. The spectators sat outside. He interrogated the child concerning the visions that appeared to her. Among other tests, he requested the spectators to inscribe their names on a piece of paper which he appeared to burn before their very eyes. Calling to the child that a note would flutter down at her feet, he requested her to pass it to him through the door. He passed his hand through the opening of the door to receive the note. In the next instant he produced a note closed with a free-mason’s seal, which contained the signatures of the spectators. This was nothing more than the trick of a prestidigitateur, such

\**Nachricht von des berühmten Cagliostro's Aufenthalt in Mithau im Jahre, 1779, und von dessen dortigen magischen Operationen.*—Charlotte Elisabeth von der Recke. Berlin und Stettin, 1787. 8vo.

as was performed by Philadelphia and Pinetti, the two great sleight of hand artists of the period. The next day the clairvoyant confessed the fact that she had been tutored by the magician, and that the visions were but figments of the imagination. Cagliostro secured a new subject, a girl of sixteen, but had the folly to fall in love with his accomplice. In exasperation she repeated the confession of her predecessor. The Polish nobles now insisted that Cagliostro invoke the spirit of the Grand Kophta (the Egyptian High Priest). This séance took place "in a dark room, on a sort of stage, lit with two candles only, and filled with clouds of incense." The Grand Kophta appeared. Through the uncertain light the spectators beheld an imposing figure in white robes and turban. A snowy beard fell upon its breast.

"What see ye?" cried in a hoarse voice the sage of the pyramids.

"I see," replied a sceptical gentleman from the audience, "that Monsieur le Comte de Cagliostro has disguised himself with a mask and a white beard."

Everybody recognized the portly figure of the vision. A rush seemed imminent. Quick as thought, the Grand Kophta, by a wave of his hands, extinguished the two candles. A sound followed as the slipping off of a mantle. The tapers were relit. Cagliostro was observed sitting where the sage had disappeared.

At Wola, in a private laboratory, he pretended to transmute mercury into silver. The scene must have been an impressive one. Girt with a freemason's apron, and standing on a black floor marked with cabalistic symbols in chalk, Cagliostro worked at the furnace. In the gloom of twilight the proceedings were held. By a clever substitution of crucibles, Cagliostro apparently accomplished the feat of transmutation, but the fraud was detected the next morning, when one of the servants of the house discovered the original crucible containing the mercury, which had been cast upon a pile of rubbish by the pretended alchemist, or one of his confederates.

In September, 1780, Cagliostro arrived in Strasburg. Here he was received with unbounded enthusiasm. He lavished money right and left, cured the poor without pay, and treated the great with haughtiness. Just outside of the city he erected a

country villa in Chinese architecture, wherein to hold his Egyptian lodges. This place was long pointed out as the Cagliostroæum. The peasants are said to have passed it with uncovered heads, such was their admiration and awe of the great wonder-worker. At Strasburg resided at that time the Cardinal Louis de Rohan, who was anxious to meet the magician. Cagliostro, to whom the fact was reported, said: "If the Cardinal is sick, he may come to me and I will cure him; if he is well, he has no further need of me, nor I of him." Cardinal de Rohan, Grand Almoner of France, Commander of the order of the Holy Ghost, enormously rich, and an amateur dabbler in alchemy and the occult sciences, was now more anxious than ever to become acquainted with the charlatan. Such disdain on the part of a layman was a new experience to the haughty churchman. His imagination, too, was fired by the stories told of the enchanter. The upshot of it was that Cagliostro and the Cardinal became bosom friends. The prelate invited the juggler and his wife to live at his episcopal palace.

The Baroness d'Oberkirch, who saw him there, says in her memoirs:\* "No one can ever form the faintest idea of the fervor with which everybody pursued Cagliostro. He was surrounded, besieged; every one trying to win a glance or a word. . . . A dozen ladies of rank and two actresses had followed him in order to continue their treatment. . . . If I had not seen it, I should never have imagined that a Prince of the Roman Church, a man in other respects intelligent and honorable, could so far let himself be imposed upon as to renounce his dignity, his free will, at the bidding of a sharper."

Cagliostro said to the Cardinal one day: "Your soul is worthy of mine, and you deserve to be the confidant of all my secrets." He presented the Cardinal with a diamond worth 20,000 francs which he pretended to have made, the churchman claiming to have been an eye-witness of the operation. The Cardinal said to the Baroness: "But that is not all; he makes gold; he has made five or six thousand francs worth before me, up there in the top of the palace. I am to have more; I am to have a great deal; he will make me the richest prince in Europe

\**Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirche, I.*



These are not dreams, madame; they are proofs. And his prophecies that have come true! And the miraculous cures that he has wrought! [*He really cured the Cardinal of the asthma.*] I tell you, he is the most extraordinary man, the sublimest man in the world."\*

From Strasburg Cagliostro went to Naples, and from thence to Bordeaux. After residing at Bordeaux for eleven months, he proceeded to Lyons in great pomp, with lackeys, grooms, guards armed with battle-axes, and heralds garbed in cloth of gold, blowing trumpets. In the year 1785 he founded at Lyons the Lodge of Triumphant Wisdom, and made many converts to his mystical doctrines. The fame of his Egyptian masonry reached Paris and created quite a stir among the lodges. The chiefs of a masonic convocation assembled in Paris wrote to him for information concerning his new rite. He scornfully refused to have anything to do with them, unless they burned all their masonic books and implements as useless trash and acknowledged their futility, claiming that his Egyptian Rite was the only true freemasonry and worthy of cultivation among men of learning. His next move was to the French capital. Behold him on his travels with coach-and-four, flunkies and outriders in gorgeous liveries of red and gold; vehicles filled with baggage and paraphernalia. Best of all, he carries with him an iron coffer which contains the silver, gold, and jewels reaped from his dupes.

#### IV.

Cagliostro's greatest triumph was achieved in Paris. A gay and frivolous aristocracy, mad after new sensations, welcomed the magician with open arms. The way had been paved for him by St. Germain and Mesmer. He made his appearance in the French capital, January 30, 1785. Fantastic stories were circulated about him. The Cardinal de Rohan selected and furnished a house for him, and visited him three or four times a week, arriving at dinner time and remaining until an advanced

\*It is an interesting fact to note that Cagliostro was recommended as a physician to our Benjamin Franklin, at the time residing in Paris. See Hale's *Franklin in France*, vol. 2, p. 26.

hour in the night. It was said that the great Cardinal assisted the sorcerer in his labors, and many persons spoke of the mysterious laboratory where gold bubbled and diamonds sparkled in crucibles brought to a white heat. But nobody except Cagliostro, and perhaps the Cardinal, ever entered that mysterious laboratory. All that was known for a certainty was that the apartments were furnished with Oriental splendor, and that Count Cagliostro in a dazzling costume received his guests with kingly dignity, and gave them his hand to kiss. Upon a black marble slab in the antechamber carved in golden letters was the universal prayer of Alexander Pope. "Father of all! in every age," etc., the parody of which ten years later Paris sang as a hymn to the Supreme Being.

Says Funck-Brentano:\* "At Paris Cagliostro showed himself what he had been at Strasburg, dignified and reserved. He refused with haughtiness the invitations to dinner sent to him by the Count of Artois, brother of the king, and the Duke of Chartres, prince of the blood. He proclaimed himself chief of the Rosicrucians, who regarded themselves as chosen beings placed above the rest of mankind, and he gave to his adepts the rarest pleasure. . . . To all who pressed him with questions as to who he was, he replied in a grave voice, knitting his eyebrows and pointing his forefinger towards the sky, 'I am he who is'; and as it was difficult to make out that he was 'he who is not,' the only thing was to bow with an air of profound deference.

"He possessed the science of the ancient priests of Egypt. His conversation turned generally on three points: (1) Universal Medicine, of which the secrets were known to him. (2) Egyptian Freemasonry, which he wished to restore, and of which he had just established a parent lodge at Lyons, for Scotch masonry, then predominant in France, was in his eyes only an inferior, degenerate form. (3) The Philosopher's Stone, which was to ensure the transmutation of all the imperfect metals into fine gold."

*\*The Diamond Necklace. Being the true Story of Marie Antoinette and the Cardinal de Rohan. From the new documents recently discovered in Paris. By Frantz Funck-Brentano. Translated from the French by H. S. Edwards. Philadelphia, 1901. 8vo.*

"He thus gave to humanity, by his universal medicine, bodily health; by Egyptian masonry, spiritual health; and by the philosopher's stone, infinite wealth." These were his principal secrets, but he had a host of others, that of predicting the winning numbers in lotteries; prophesying as to the future; softening marble and restoring it to its pristine hardness; of giving to cotton the lustre and softness of silk, which has been re-invented in our day by a chemical process.

Many writers on magic have fancied that the art of making gold was the secret that lay hid under the forms of Egyptian theology. Says the Benedictine monk, Pernetz: "The hermetic science was the source of all the riches of the Egyptian kings, and the object of these mysteries so hidden under the veil of their pretended religion." In a subterranean chamber beneath the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, Hermes Trismegistus is supposed, according to mediæval alchemists, to have placed his Table of Emerald, upon which he engraved the secret of transmuting metals into gold.

Among the many stories told of Cagliostro, that of the supper in the hotel of the Rue Saint Claude, where the ghosts made merry, is the most extraordinary. Six guests and the host took their places at a round table upon which there were thirteen covers. Each guest pronounced the name of the dead man whose spirit he desired to appear at the banquet table. Cagliostro, concentrating his mysterious forces, gave the invitation in a solemn and commanding tone. One after another the six guests appeared. They were the Duc de Choiseul, Voltaire, d'Alembert, Diderot, the Abbé de Voisenon, and Montesquieu.

The story of this spirit séance created a sensation in Paris. It reached the court, and one evening, when the conversation turned upon the banquet of the ghosts, Louis XVI frowned, shrugged his shoulders, and resumed his game of cards. The queen became indignant, and forbade the mention of the name of the charlatan in her presence. Nevertheless, some of the light-headed ladies of the court burned for an introduction to the superb sorcerer. They begged Lorenza Feliciani to get him to give them a course of lectures or lessons in magic to which no gentlemen were to be admitted. Lorenza replied that he would consent, provided there were thirty-six pupils. The list was made

up in a day, and a week afterward the fair dames got their first lesson. But they gossiped about it. This caused another scandal, and consequently the first lesson was the last.

Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite of Masonry was well received in Paris, especially the lodge for ladies, which was presided over by the beautiful Lorenza, his wife. It was appropriately called *Isis*. Among the members of this female lodge were the Countesses de Brienne, Dessalles, de Polignac, de Brassac, de Choiseul, d'Espinchal, the Marchioness d'Avrincourt, and Mmes. de Loménie, de Genlis, de Bercy, de Trevières, de Baussan, de Monteil, d'Ailly, etc.

Cagliostro lived like a lord, thanks to the revenues obtained from the initiates into his masonic rite, and the money which he unquestionably received from his dupe, the Cardinal de Rohan, who was magic mad.

"His wife," says a gossip writer, "was rarely seen, but by all accounts she was a woman of bewildering beauty, realizing the Greek lines in all their antique purity and enhanced by an Italian expression. The most enthusiastic of her so-called admirers were precisely those who had never seen her face. There were many duels to decide the question as to the color of her eyes, some contending that they were black, and others that they were blue. Duels were also fought over the dimple which some admirers insisted was on the right cheek, while others said that the honor belonged to the left cheek. She appeared to be no more than twenty years old, but she spoke sometimes of her eldest son, who was for some years a captain in the Dutch army."

The magician's sojourn in Paris caused the greatest excitement. His portrait and that of his wife were to be seen everywhere, on fans, on rings, on snuff-boxes, and on medallions. His bust was cut in marble by the famous sculptor, Houdon, cast in bronze, and placed in the mansions of the nobility. He was called by his admirers "the divine Cagliostro." To one of the old portraits was appended the following verse:

"De l'Ami des Humains reconnaissez les traits :  
Tous ses jours sont marqués par de nouveaux bienfaits,  
Il prolonge la Vie, il secourt l'indigence ;  
Le plaisir d'être utile est seul sa récompense."

Hats and neckties were named after him. In Paris as in Strasburg, he gave away large sums of money to the poor and cured them of their ailments free of charge. His mansion was always crowded with noble guests. The idle aristocracy could find nothing better to do than attend the spirit séances of the charlatan. The shades of Voltaire, Rousseau, and other dead celebrities were summoned from the "vasty deep," impersonated doubtless by clever confederates in the pay of Cagliostro, often



BUST OF CAGLIOSTRO.

After Houdon.

(In the possession of M. Storelli.)



CAGLIOSTRO.

From *Vie de Joseph Balsamo, etc.*  
Paris, 1791.

aided by mechanical and optical accessories. The art of phantasmagoria, in which the concave mirror plays a part, was well known to the enchanter. The Count de Beugnot gives in detail, in his interesting autobiography, an account of Cagliostro's performances at the residences of Madame de la Motte and the Cardinal de Rohan. The niece of Count de la Motte, a Mlle. de

la Tour, a charming girl of fifteen, frequently acted as clairvoyant in the mystical séances. She is reported to have possessed all the requisites of a seeress: angelic purity, delicate nerves, and blue eyes, also to have been born under the constellation Capricorn. "Her mother nearly died of joy."

Says Count Beugnot: "When she learned that her child fulfilled all these conditions of Egyptian thaumaturgy, she thought the treasures of Memphis and of that large city in the interior of Africa were about to fall upon her family, which was badly in need of them." In the report of the necklace trial (Arch. Nat. X2, B-1417), the young girl confesses to have aided the charlatan in his magical operations at the house of the Cardinal, by pretending to see visions of Marie Antoinette and others in a globe of water, which was surrounded by lighted tapers and figures of Isis and Apis. He had decked her out in a freemason's apron embroidered with cabalistic characters. She aided him because "she did not want to be bothered," and answered his leading questions, etc. But there was perhaps another reason for her acquiescence in the fraud. Cagliostro had declared to her, in the presence of the prelate, her aunt and mother, when she first attempted to play the part of pythoness and failed, that her inability to see anything in the globe was evidence that she was not innocent. Stung by his inuendos, she immediately yielded and saw all she was desired to see, thereby becoming his confederate to deceive De Rohan.

An interesting pen portrait of Cagliostro is contained in Beugnot's memoirs. The Count met the enchanter for the first time at the house of Madame de la Motte:

"Cagliostro was of medium height, rather stout, with an olive complexion, a very short neck, round face, two large eyes on a level with the cheeks, and a broad, turned-up nose. . . . His hair was dressed in a way new to France, being divided into several small tresses that united behind the head, and were twisted up into what was then called a club.

"He wore on that day an iron gray coat of French make, with gold lace, a scarlet waistcoat trimmed with broad Spanish lace, red breeches, his sword looped to the skirt of his coat, and a laced hat with a white feather, the latter a decoration still

required of mountebanks, tooth-drawers and other medical practitioners, who proclaim and retail their drugs in the open air. Cagliostro set off this costume by lace ruffles, several valuable rings, and shoe-buckles which were, it is true, of antique design, but bright enough to be taken for real diamonds. . . . The face, attire, and the whole man made an impression on me that I could not prevent. I listened to the talk. He spoke some sort of medley, half French and half Italian, and made many quotations which might be Arabic, but which he did not trouble himself to translate. I could not remember any more of [his conversation] than that the hero had spoken of heaven, of the stars, of the Great Secret, of Memphis, of the high-priest, of transcendental chemistry, of giants and monstrous beasts, of a city ten times as large as Paris, in the middle of Africa, where he had correspondents."\*

Cagliostro often boasted of his great age.

One day in Strasburg, he stopped before a huge crucifix of carved wood, and contemplated it with melancholy countenance.

"The likeness is excellent," he remarked to one of his votaries, "but I cannot understand how the artist, who certainly never saw Christ, could have secured such a perfect portrait."

"You knew Christ, then?" inquired the neophyte, breathlessly.

"We were on the most intimate terms."

"My dear Count!—"

"I mean what I say. How often we strolled together on the sandy shore of the Lake of Tiberias. How infinitely sweet his voice. But, alas, he would not heed my advice. He loved to walk on the seashore, where he picked up a band of *lazzaroni*—of fishermen and beggars. This and his preaching brought him to a bitter end."

Turning to his servant, Cagliostro added: "Do you remember that evening at Jerusalem when they crucified Christ?"

"No, Monsieur le Comte," replied the well-tutored lackey, bowing low, "you forget that I have only been in your employ for the last fifteen hundred years."

Baron Munchausen is not to be compared to Cag

\*Beugnot, Comte de. *Mémoires*. Paris, 1866.

## V.

Cagliostro was at the height of his fame, when suddenly he was arrested and thrown into the Bastille. He was charged with complicity in the affair of the diamond necklace. Here is his own account of the arrest: "On the 22d of August, 1785, a commissaire, an exempt, and eight policemen entered my home. The pillage began in my presence. They compelled me to open my secretary. Elixirs, balms, and precious liquors all became the prey of the officers who came to arrest me. I begged the commissaire to permit me to use my carriage. He refused! The agent took me by the collar. He had pistols, the stocks of which appeared from the pockets of his coat. They hustled me into the street and scandalously dragged me along the boulevard all the way to the rue Notre Dame du Nazareth. There a carriage appeared which I was permitted to enter to take the road to the Bastille."

What was this mysterious affair of the diamond necklace which led to his incarceration in a state prison? In brief the story is as follows:

The court jewelers, Böhmer and Bassange, had in their possession a magnificent diamond necklace, valued at 1,800,000 livres, originally designed for the ivory neck of the fair but frail Madame du Barry, mistress of Louis XV. But Louis—"the well beloved"—died before the necklace was completed; the Sultana went into exile, and the unlucky jewelers found themselves with the diamond collar on their hands, instead of on the neck of Du Barry. They were obliged to dispose of it, or become bankrupt. Twice Böhmer offered it to Marie Antoinette, but she refused to purchase it, or permit her husband, Louis XVI., to do so, alleging that France had more urgent need of war ships than jewels. Poor Böhmer, distracted at her refusal to buy the necklace, threatened to commit suicide. The matter became food for gossip among the *quid nuncs* of the Court. Unfortunate necklace! it led to one of the most romantic intrigues of history, involving in its jeweled toils a Queen, a cardinal, a courtesan and a conjurer. Living at the village of Versailles at the time was the Countess de la Motte, an ex-mantua maker and



a descendant of an illegitimate scion of the Valois family who had committed a forgery under Louis XIII. Her husband was a sort of gentleman-soldier in the gendarmerie, a gambler, and a rake. Madame de la Motte-Valois, boasting of the royal blood that flowed in her veins, had many times petitioned the King to assist her. A small pension had been granted, but it was totally inadequate to supply her wants. She wished also to gain a foothold at Versailles and flutter amidst the butterfly-countesses of the *Salle de l'Oeil-de-Bœuf*. Looking about for a noble protector, some one who could advance her claims, she pitched upon the Cardinal de Rohan, who was the Grand Almoner of the King. He supplied her with money, but accomplished very little else for her. Though Grand Almoner and a Cardinal, Louis de Rohan was *persona non grata* at the court. He was cordially detested by Marie Antoinette not only because of his dissolute habits, but on account of slanderous letters he had written about her when she was still a Dauphiness. This coldness on the part of the Queen caused the Cardinal great anguish, as he longed to be Prime Minister, and sway the destinies of France through the Queen like a second Richelieu, Fleury or Mazarin. More than that, he loved the haughty Antoinette. All these things he confided to Madame de la Motte. When the story of Böhmer and the diamond necklace was noised abroad, Madame de la Motte conceived a plot of wonderful audacity. She determined to possess the priceless collar and make the Cardinal the medium of obtaining it. She deluded the Cardinal into the belief that she was in the Queen's confidence. She asserted that Marie Antoinette had at last yielded to her pleadings for recognition as a descendant of the Valois and granted her social interviews. She confided to him that the Queen secretly desired to be reconciled to him. She became the pretended "go-between" between the Cardinal and the Queen, and delivered numerous little notes to him, signed "Antoinette de France." Finally she arranged an interview for him, at night, in the park of Versailles, ostensibly with the Queen, but in reality with a young girl named d'Oliva who bore a remarkable resemblance to Marie Antoinette. The d'Oliva saw him only for a few moments and presented him with a rose.

The Cardinal was completely duped. "Madame de la Motte persuaded him," says Greeven, "into the belief that the Queen was yearning for the necklace, but, as she could not afford it, he could assure himself of her favor by becoming security for the payment. She produced a forged instrument, which purported to have been executed by the Queen, and upon which he bound himself as security." The necklace was delivered to the Cardinal, who handed it over to Madame de la Motte, to be given to Marie Antoinette. Thus it was, as Carlyle says, the *collier de la reine* vanished through "the horn-gate of dreams."

But, asks the curious reader, what has all this to do with Cagliostro? What part had he to play in the drama? This: When the Countess de la Motte was arrested, she attempted to throw the blame of the affair upon the Cardinal and Cagliostro. She alleged that they had summoned her into one of their mystic séances. "After the usual hocus-pocus, the Cardinal made over to her a casket containing the diamonds without their setting and directed her to deliver them to her husband, with instructions to dispose of them at once in London. Upon this information Cagliostro and his wife were arrested. He was detained without hearing, from the 22d of August, 1785, until the 30th of January, 1786, when he was first examined by the Judges, and he was not set at liberty till the 1st of June, 1786."

The trial was the most famous in the annals of the Parliament. Cagliostro and the Cardinal were acquitted with honor. The Countess de la Motte was sentenced to be exposed naked, with a rope around her neck, in front of the Conciergerie, and to be publicly whipped and branded by the hangman with the letter V (*Voleuse—thief*) on each shoulder. She was further sentenced to life imprisonment in the prison for abandoned women. She escaped from the latter place, however, to London, where she was killed on the 23d day of August, 1791, by a fall from a window. The Count de la Motte was sentenced *in contumacium*. He was safe in London at the time and had disposed of the diamonds to various dealers. The d'Oliva was set free without punishment. The man who forged the letter for Madame de la Motte, her secretary, Vilette, was banished for life. The Countess de Cagliostro was honorably discharged.

The Cardinal was unquestionably innocent, as was fully established at the trial. His overweening ambition and his mad love for Marie Antoinette had rendered him an easy dupe to the machinations of the band of sharpers. But how about Cagliostro? The essayist Greeven seems to think that the alchemist was more or less mixed up in the swindle. He sums up the suspicions as follows: "*First*, his [Cagliostro's] immense influence over the Cardinal, and his intimate relations with him, render it impossible that so gigantic a fraud could have been practiced without his knowledge. *Second*, he was in league with



MADAME DE LA MOTTE'S ESCAPE. (After an English print of 1790.)

the Countess for the purpose of deceiving the Cardinal, in connection with the Queen."

M. Frantz Funck-Brentano writes: "The idea of implicating Cagliostro in the intrigue had been conceived, as Georgel says, with diabolical cunning. If Jeanne de Valois had in the first instance made a direct accusation against Cardinal de Rohan, no one would have believed in it. But there was something mysterious and suspicious about Cagliostro, and it was known what influence he exercised on the mind of the Cardinal. 'The alchemist,' she suggested, 'took the necklace to pieces in order to increase by means of it the occult treasures of an unheard-of fortune.' 'To conceal his theft,' says Doillot [Madame de la

Motte's lawyer], 'he ordered M. de Rohan, in virtue of the influence he had established over him, to sell some of the diamonds and to get a few of them mounted at Paris through the Countess de la Motte, and to get more considerable quantities mounted and sold in England by her husband.' . . . Cagliostro had one unanswerable argument: the Cardinal had made his agreement with the jewelers on the 29th of January, 1785, and he, Cagliostro, had only arrived in Paris at nine in the evening of the 30th."

Cagliostro refuted the charges with wonderful *sang froid*. He appeared in court "proud and triumphant in his coat of green silk embroidered with gold." "Who are you? and whence do you come?" asked the attorney for the crown.

"I am an illustrious traveler," he answered bombastically. Everyone present laughed. He then harangued the judges in theatrical style. He told the most impossible stories of his adventures in Arabia and Egypt. He informed the judges that he was unacquainted with the place of his birth and the name of his parents, but that he spent his infancy in Medina, Arabia, and was brought up under the cognomen of Acharat. He resided in the palace of the Great Muphti, and always had the servants to attend his wants, besides his tutor, named Althotas, who was very fond of him. Althotas told him that his (Cagliostro's) father and mother were Christians and nobles, who died when he was three months old, leaving him in the care of the Muphti. On one occasion, he asked his preceptor to tell him the name of his parents. Althotas replied that it would be dangerous for him to know, but some incautious expressions dropped by the tutor led him to believe that they were from Malta. When twelve years of age he began his travels, and learned the languages of the Orient. He remained three years in the sacred city of Mecca. The Sherif or Governor of that place showed him such unusual attention and kindness, that he oftentimes thought that personage was his father. He quitted this good man with tears in his eyes, and never saw him again.

"Adieu, nature's unfortunate child, adieu!" cried the Sherif of Mecca to him, as he took his departure.

Whenever he arrived in any city, either of Europe, Asia, or Africa, he found an account opened for him at the leading banker's or merchant's. Like the Count of Monte Cristo, his credit was unlimited. He had only to whisper the word "Acharat," and his wants were immediately supplied. He really believed that the Sherif was the friend to whom all was owing. This was the secret of his wealth. He denied all complicity in the necklace swindle, and scornfully refuted the charge of Madame de la Motte, that he was "an empiric, a mean alchemist, a dreamer on the Philosopher's Stone, a false prophet, a profaner of true worship, the self-dubbed Count de Cagliostro."

"As to my being a false prophet," he exclaimed grandiloquently, "I have not always been so; for I once prophesied to the Cardinal de Rohan, that Madame de la Motte would prove a dangerous woman, and the result has verified my prediction."

In conclusion he said that every charge that Madame de la Motte had preferred against him was false, and that she was *mentiris impudentissime*, which two words he requested her lawyers to translate for her, as it was not polite to tell her so in French.

The Inquisition biographer, regarding the subject of the necklace, says: "It is difficult to decide whether, in this celebrated affair, Madame de la Motte or the Count Cagliostro had the greatest share of glory. It is certain, however, that both of them acquired uncommon *éclat*, and indeed attempted to surpass each other. We cannot affirm that they acted in concert on this memorable occasion; we can, however, with safety assert that Cagliostro was well acquainted with the designs of this woman, so wonderfully formed for intrigue, and that he always kept his eye steadily fixed upon the famous necklace. He certainly perceived, and has indeed *confessed in his interrogatories* [the italics are mine], *that he was acquainted with all the manoeuvres which she put in practice to accomplish her criminal designs.*

"The whole affair was at length discovered. He had foreseen this; and wished to have evaded the inevitable consequences attendant on detection; but it was now too late. The officers of the police were persuaded that without his aid this piece of

roguery and deception could never have been carried on; and he was arrested and imprisoned in the Bastille. He, however, did not lose courage; he even found means to corrupt his guards, and to establish a correspondence with the other prisoners who were confined along with him. It was owing to this that they were enabled to be uniform in the answers which they gave in to the various interrogatories to which they were obliged to reply.

"Cagliostro, who has recounted the whole of the circumstances to us, has added, of his own accord, that he denied everything to his judges with the utmost intrepidity; and exhibited such a sameness in his replies, that, on Madame de la Motte's being confronted with him, and finding herself unable to quash his evidence, she became so furious, that she threw a candlestick at his head in the presence of all his judges. By this means he was declared innocent."

So much for the Inquisition biography. The incident of the candlestick has been verified by the archives of the Parliament.

Cagliostro was acquitted.

He drove in triumph from the Bastille to his residence, after hearing his order of discharge. His coach was preceded by "a fantastic cripple, who distributed medicines and presents among the crowd." He found the Rue Saint Claude thronged with friends and sympathizers, anxious to welcome him home. At this period revolutionary sentiments were openly vented by the people of France. The throne was being undermined by the philosophers and politicians. Any excuse was made to revile Louis XVI and his queen. Scurrilous pamphlets were published declaring that Marie Antoinette was equally guilty with the de la Mottes in the necklace swindle. Cagliostro consequently was regarded as a martyr to the liberties of man. His arrest under the detested *lettre de cachet*, upon mere suspicion, and long incarceration in the Bastille without trial, were indeed flagrant abuses of justice and gave his sympathizers a whip with which to lash the King and Court.

His wife had been liberated some time before him. She met him at the door of the temple of magic, and he swooned in her arms. Whether this was a genuine swoon or not, it is

impossible to say, for Cagliostro was ever a *poseur* and never neglected an opportunity for theatrical effect and self-advertisement. He accused the Marquis de Launay, Governor of the Bastille—he who had his head chopped off and elevated upon a pike a few years later—of criminal misappropriation of his effects, money, medicines, alchemical powders, elixirs, etc., etc., which he valued at a high sum. The Commissioner of Police who arrested him was also included in this accusation. He appealed to his judges, who referred him to the Civil Courts. But the case never came to trial. The day after his acquittal he was banished from France by order of the King. At St. Denis “his carriage drove between two dense and silent lines of well-wishers, while, as his vessel cleared from the port of Boulogne, five thousand persons knelt down on the shore to receive his blessing.” He went direct to London. No sooner there, than he filed his suit against the Marquis de Launay, “appealing, of course, to the hearts of all Frenchmen as a lonely and hunted exile.” The French Government, through its ambassador, granted him leave to come in person to Paris to prosecute his suit, assuring him of safe conduct and immunity from all prosecution, legal as well as social. But Cagliostro refused this offer, hinting that it was merely a stratagem to decoy him to Paris and reincarcerate him in a dungeon. No clear-headed, impartial person believed that the Marquis de Launay was guilty of the charge laid at his door. Whatever else he may have been, tyrannical, cold, unsympathetic, the Governor of the Bastille was a man of honor and above committing a theft. In fact, Cagliostro’s accusation was a trumped-up affair, designed to annoy and keep open “a running sore in the side of the French authorities.” Notoriety is the life of charlatanry. Cagliostro was no common quack, as his history shows. He next published a pamphlet, dated June 20th, 1786, prophesying that the Bastille would be demolished and converted into a public promenade; and, that a ruler should arise in France, who should abolish *lettres de cachet* and convoke the Estates-General. In a few years the prediction was fulfilled. Poor De Launay lost his life, whereupon Cagliostro issued a pamphlet exulting over the butchery of his enemy. In London, Cagliostro became the



bosom friend of the eccentric Lord George Gordon, the hero of the "no-popery" riots. Eventually he became deeply involved in debt, and was obliged to pawn his effects. He was unable



CAGLIOSTRO UNMASKED AT THE LODGE OF ANTIQUITY, LONDON.  
From a Rare Print in the Possession of the Supreme Council, A. A. S. R., Washington, D. C.

to impress the common-sense, practical English with his pretensions to animal magnetism, transcendental medicine, and occultism. One of his vaunted schemes was to light up the streets of London with sea-water, which by his magic power he proposed to change into oil. The newspapers ridiculed him,



especially the *Courrier de l'Europe*, published and edited by M. Morande, who had "picked up some ugly facts about the swindler's early career." The freemasons repudiated him with scorn, and would have nothing to do with his Egyptian Rite. There is a rare old print, a copy of which may be seen in the Scottish Rite Library, Washington, D. C., which depicts the unmasking of the famous imposter at the Lodge of Antiquity, published Nov. 21, 1786, at London. It was engraved by an eye-witness of the scene. In company with some French gentlemen, Cagliostro visited the lodge one evening. At the banquet which followed the working of the degree, a certain worthy brother named Mash, an optician, was called upon to sing. Instead of a post-prandial ditty, he gave a clever imitation of a quack doctor selling nostrums, and dilating bombastically upon the virtues of his elixirs, balsams (Balsamos), and cordials. Cagliostro was not slow in perceiving that he was the target for Brother Mash's shafts of ridicule. His "front of brass," as Carlyle has it, was beaten in, his pachyderm was penetrated by the barbed arrows of the ingenious optician's wit. He left the hall in high dudgeon, followed by the jeers of the assembled masons. Alas, for the Grand Kophta, no "vaults of steel," no masonic honors for him in London.

The verse appended to the engraving of Cagliostro and the English lodge is as follows:

"Born, God knows where, supported, God knows how,  
 From whom descended, difficult to know.  
*Lord Crop*\* adopts him as a bosom friend,  
 And manly dares his character defend.  
 This self-dubb'd Count, some few years since became  
 A Brother Mason in a borrow'd name;  
 For names like *Semple* numerous he bears,  
 And Proteus like, in fifty forms appears.  
 'Behold in me (he says) Dame Nature's child,  
 'Of Soul benevolent, and Manners mild;  
 'In me the guiltless Acharat behold,  
 'Who knows the mystery of making Gold;  
 'A feeling heart I boast, a conscience pure,  
 'I boast a Balsam every ill to cure;  
 'My Pills and Powders, all disease remove,  
 'Renew your vigor, and your health improve.'

\*Lord George Gordon.

This cunning part the arch impostor acts,  
 And thus the weak and credulous attracts,  
 But now, his history is rendered clear,  
 The arrant hypocrite, and quack appear.  
 First as *Balsams*, he to paint essay'd,  
 But only daubing, he renounc'd the trade.  
 Then, as a Mountebank, abroad he stroll'd  
 And many a name on Death's black list enroll'd.  
 Three times he visited the British shore,  
 And every time a different name he bore.  
 The brave Alsations he with ease cajol'd  
 By boasting of Egyptian forms of old.  
 The self-same trick he practis'd at Bourdeaux,  
 At Strasburg, Lyons, and at Paris too.  
 But fate for *Brother Mash* reserv'd the task  
 To strip the vile impostor of his mask,  
 May all true Masons his plain tale attend  
 And Satire's lash to fraud shall put an end."

## VI.

To escape the harpies of the law, who threatened him with a debtor's prison, Cagliostro fled to his old hunting-ground, the Continent, leaving *la petite Comtesse* to follow him as best she could. But the game was played out. The police had by this time become fully cognizant of his impostures. He was forbidden to practice his peculiar system of medicine and masonry in Austria, Germany, Russia, and Spain. Drawn like a needle to the lodestone rock, he went to Rome. Foolish Grand Kophta! Freemasonry was a capital offence in the dominions of the Pope. One lodge, however, existed. Says Greeven: "There is reason to suppose that it was tolerated only because it enabled the Holy Church to spy out the movements of free-masons in general." Cagliostro attempted to found one of his Egyptian lodges, but met with no success. His exchequer became depleted. He appealed to the National Assembly of France to revoke the order of banishment, on the ground of "his services to the liberty of France." Suddenly on the evening of Dec. 27, 1789, he and his wife were arrested and incarcerated in the fortress of San Angelo. His highly-prized manuscript of Egyptian masonry was seized, together with all his papers and correspondence. He was tried by the Holy Inquisition. It must have been an impressive scene—that gloomy council cham-

ber with the cowed inquisitors. Cagliostro's wife appeared against him and lifted the veil of Isis that hid the mysteries of the charlatan's career. The Egyptian manuscript of George Coston, the seals, the masonic regalia and paraphernalia were mute and damning evidences of his guilt. He was indeed a freemason, even though he were not an alchemist, a soothsayer, the Grand Kophta of the Pyramids. Cagliostro's line of defense was that "he had labored throughout to lead back freemasons, through the Egyptian ritual, to Catholic orthodoxy." He appeared at first to be contrite. But it availed him nothing. Finding his appeals for mercy useless, he adopted another tack, and told impossible stories of his adventures. He harangued the Holy Fathers for hours, despite their threats and protests. Nothing could stop his loquacious tongue from wagging. Finally, he was condemned to death as a heretic, sorcerer, and freemason, but Pope Pius VI., on the 21st of March, 1791, commuted his sentence to life imprisonment. His manuscript was declared to be "superstitious, blasphemous, wicked, and heretical," and was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman, together with his masonic implements.

After the sentence of the Inquisition, Cagliostro was taken back to the Castle of San Angelo and immured in a gloomy dungeon, where no one but the jailer came near him. But still his indomitable spirit was unconquered. He conceived a plan of escape. Expressing the greatest contrition for his crimes, he begged the Governor of the prison to send him a confessor. The request was granted, and a Capuchin monk was detailed to listen to the condemned man's catalogue of sins. During the confession, the charlatan suddenly sprang upon the monk and endeavored to throttle him. His object was to escape from the Castle in the Capuchin's robe. But the Father Confessor proved to be a member of the church militant, and vigorously defended himself. Cagliostro's attempt proved futile. This anecdote was related by S. A. S. the Prince Bernard of Saxe-Weimar to the French masonic historian, Thory (*Acta Latamorum*, I, 68). The Prince declared it to be authentic.

Soon after the above-mentioned event, the Pontifical Government ordered Cagliostro to be conducted in the night time to

the Fortress of San Leon, in the Duchy of Urbino. Here in a subterranean dungeon, it is said, he was literally swallowed up alive, like the victims of mediæval days in the stone *in pace*. From this epoch we lose all traces of the great necromancer. It is said that he died in the month of August, 1795, the rigor of his punishment having somewhat abated. The following item will prove of interest: "News comes from Rome that the famous Cagliostro is dead in the fortress of San Leon." (*Moniteur universel*, 6 Octobre, 1795. Correspondence dated from Genoa, August 25th.) Everything concerning that death is shrouded in mystery. The stone walls of San Leon have told no tales. No one knows where the magician is buried. In all likelihood in some ignoble prison grave. One can readily picture the obsequies: A flash of flambeaux in the night; a coarse winding-sheet; a wooden coffin; an indifferent priest to mumble a few Latin prayers; the callous grave diggers with their spades—and all is over! No masonic honors here; no arches of steel; no mystic lights and regalia. Farewell forever, Balsamo! I confess a weakness for you, despite your charlatanry. Doubtless you were welcomed with open arms to the Shades by your brethren—the Chaldeans, the sorcerers and the soothsayers.

Alfred de Caston, in his *Marchands de Miracles*, Paris 1864, remarks that Cagliostro "rendered up his soul to God" just one hundred years after the death of his predecessor in the *art magique*, the brilliant charlatan Joseph Francis Borri of Milan, who was condemned to perpetual imprisonment in the Castle of St. Angelo by the Holy Inquisition, as a heretic, alchemist, and sorcerer. A curious coincidence, says Castro.

The beautiful "Flower of Vesuvius," Lorenza Feliciani, escaped severe punishment by immuring herself in the convent of St. Appolonia at Rome, where she died in 1794. She was more sinned against than sinning.

There lived in 1858, an old woman known by the name of Madeline, who inhabited a miserable attic in Paris, the ceiling of which was covered with cabalistic and astrological emblems. She pretended to divine the future and tell fortunes. She was the daughter of Cagliostro and a Jewess of Lyons. (*Le Figaro*, 13 mai, 1858.)

In the Inquisition biography some curious letters to Cagliostro from his masonic correspondents in France are published. They evidence the profound respect, one might almost say blind worship, with which he was regarded by his disciples.

The masonic lodge at Rome was disrupted shortly after Cagliostro's arrest. The Sbirri of the Holy Office pounced down upon it, but the birds had flown, taking with them their most important papers. Father Marcellus says that among the members of this Roman lodge were an Englishman and an American.

And so endeth the career of Cagliostro, one of the most romantic of history. His condemnation as a sorcerer and freemason has invested him with "the halo of a religious martyr, of which perhaps no one was less deserving."

Among his effects the Inquisition found a peculiar seal, upon which the mysterious letters "L. P. D." were engraved. These letters were supposed to stand for the Latin sentence, *Lilia pedibus destrue*, which rendered into the vulgar tongue signifies, "Tread the lilies under foot." The fleur-de-lys was the heraldic device of the Bourbon Kings of France, hence this trampling upon the lily alluded to the stamping out of the French monarchy by the freemasons. However, it is more than probable that the initials, arranged as follows, L. D. P., stood for *Liberté de Penser*—"Freedom of thought"—which is a motto of Scottish Rite Masonry. This was the opinion of General Albert Pike, 33d degree, than whom no greater masonic student ever lived.

Many theosophical writers have placed implicit belief in the mission of Cagliostro. They have regarded him as a genuine adept in magic and alchemy, and not a *chevalier d'industrie* preying upon a credulous world. Totally ignoring the evidence contained in the police archives\* of Paris and the numerous brochures by eminent men and women who personally knew Cagliostro, they point to the Inquisition biography as a mass of false evidence compiled by religious bigots, and consequently unreliable, as if no other testimony regarding Cagliostro's character existed. Father Marcellus had an ecclesiastical axe to grind,

\*See *Documents manuscrits* in the French archives at Paris (Cartons: X2 B 1417—F7, 4445 B—Y, 11514—Y, 13125.)

it is true, to prove Cagliostro a freemason and heretic (heinous crimes in the eyes of the Roman Church, but absurd charges in the eyes of all tolerant men), nevertheless he showed conclusively that Joseph Balsamo of Palermo, the man of many aliases, was also a charlatan, impostor and evil liver. All impartial contemporary biographers corroborate the facts adduced by the Inquisition in this respect. The Cardinal de Rohan is not a competent witness for Cagliostro, for he was blinded by his superstitious belief in magic and alchemy. *Populus vult decipi, decipiatur*—people who wish to be deceived are deceived.

Some writers have asserted that Cagliostro was the agent of the Templars, and therefore wrote to the freemasons of London that the time had arrived to begin the work of rebuilding the Temple of the Eternal. With the heads of the Order he had vowed to overturn the Throne and the Altar upon the tomb of the martyred Grand Master of Templars, Jacques de Molai. Learned in the esoteric doctrines of the Orient, the Knights Templars, or Poor Fellow Soldiery of the Holy House of the Temple, were accused of sorcery and witchcraft, hence their persecution by the Church, and Philippe le Bel of France. De Molai, before he was burned to death in Paris, organized and instituted what afterwards became in the eighteenth century occult, hermetic or Scottish Masonry. And thus the freemasons traced their order to the Templars of the Middle Ages, from whom they inherited the theosophical doctrines of Egypt and India. Such is the romantic but improbable legend. Color is lent to the story by Cagliostro himself. Among other Munchausen tales related by him to his Inquisitors, he told how he had visited the Illuminati of Frankfurt, when on his way to Strasburg. In an underground cavern the secret Grand Master of Templars "showed him his signature under a horrible form of oath, traced in blood, and pledged him to destroy all despots, especially in Rome."

Taking this idea for a theme, Alexander the Great—he of the pen, not of the sword—has built up a series of improbable though highly romantic novels about the personality of Cagliostro, entitled *The Memoirs of a Physician* and *The Diamond Necklace*. He makes him the Grand Kophtha of a Society of

Illuminati, or exalted freemasons, which extends throughout the world. Pledged to the propagation of liberty, equality, and fraternity among men, the mystic brotherhood seeks to overthrow the thrones of Europe and the Papacy, symbols of oppression and persecution.

*The Memoirs of a Physician* opens with a remarkable prologue, descriptive of a solemn conclave of the secret superiors of the Order. The meeting takes place at night in a ruined chateau located in a mountainous region near the old city of Strasbourg. Cagliostro reveals his identity as the Arch-master of the Fraternity, the Grand Kophta, who is in possession of the secrets of the pyramids. He takes upon himself the important task of "treading the lilies under foot" and bringing about the destruction of the monarchy in France, the storm-centre of Europe. He departs on his mission. Like Torrini, the conjurer, he has a miniature house on wheels drawn by two Flemish horses. One part of the vehicle is fitted up as an alchemical laboratory, wherein the sage Althotas makes researches for the elixir of life. Arriving at the chateau of a nobleman of the *ancien régime*, Cagliostro meets the young dauphiness Marie Antoinette, on her way to Paris, accompanied by a brilliant cortège. He causes her to see in a carafe of water her death by the guillotine. Aided by the freemasons of Paris, Cagliostro sets to work to encompass the ruin of the throne and to bring on the great Revolution. Dumas in this remarkable series of novels passes in review before us Jean Jacques Rousseau, Cardinal de Rohan, Louis XV and XVI, Marie Antoinette, Countess du Barry, Madame de la Motte, Danton, Marat, and a host of people famous in the annals of history. Cagliostro is exalted from a charlatan into an apostle of liberty, endowed with many noble qualities. He is represented as possessing occult powers, and his séances are depicted as realities. Dumas himself was a firm believer in spiritualism, and hobnobbed with the American medium Daniel D. Home.

## VII.

Cagliostro's house in the Marais quarter, Paris, still remains—a memorial in stone of its former master. In the summer

of 1899 the *Courrier des Etats-Unis*, New York, contained an interesting article on this mansion. I quote as follows:

"Cagliostro's house still stands in Paris. Few alterations have been made in it since the days of its glories and mysteries; and one may easily imagine the effect which it produced in the night upon those who gazed upon its strange pavilions and wide terraces when the lurid lights of the alchemist's furnaces streamed through the outer window blinds. The building preserves its noble lines in spite of modern additions and at the same time has a weird appearance which produces an almost depressing effect. But this doubtless comes from the imagination, because the house was not built by Cagliostro;



COURTYARD OF CAGLIOSTRO'S HOUSE IN PARIS (PRESENT CONDITION).

he simply rented it. When he took up his quarters in it, it was the property of the Marquise d'Orvillers. Cagliostro made no changes in it, except perhaps a few temporary interior additions for the machines which he used in his séances in magic.

"The plan of the building may well be said to be abnormal. The outer gate opens upon the Rue Saint Claude at the angle of the Boulevard Beaumarchais. The courtyard has a morose and solemn aspect. At the end under a flagged porch there is a stone staircase worn by time, but it still preserves its old iron railing. On looking at that staircase, one cannot help thinking of the hosts of beautiful women, attracted by curiosity to the den of the sorcerer, and terrified at what they imagined they were about to see, who placed their trembling hands upon that old railing. Here we can evoke



the shade of Mme. de la Motte running up the steps, with her head covered with a cloak, and the ghosts of the valets of Cardinal de Rohan sleeping in the driver's seat of the carriage with a lantern at their feet, while their master, in company with the Great Kophta, is occupied with necromancy, metallurgy, cabala, or oneirocritics, which, as everybody knows, constitute the four elementary divisions of Cagliostro's art.

"A secret stairway now walled up ran near the large one to the second story, where its traces are found: and a third stairway, narrow and tortuous, still exists at the other end of the building on the boulevard side. It is in the center of the wall, in complete darkness, and leads to the old salons now cut into apartments, the windows of which look out upon a terrace. Below, with their mouldering doors, are the carriage house and the stable.—the stable of Djerid, the splendid black horse of Lorenza Feliciani."

To verify the above statement, I wrote to M. Alfred de Ricaudy (an authority on archæological matters and editor of *L'Echo du Public*, Paris), who responded as follows, Jan. 13, 1900:

"The house still exists just as it was in the time of Cagliostro [the exterior]. Upon the boulevard, contiguous to the mansion, there was formerly the shop of one Camerlingue, a bookseller, now occupied by an upholsterer. On January 30, 1785, Cagliostro took up his residence in this quaint old house. It was then No. 30 Rue St. Claude, at the corner of the Boulevard Saint Antoine, afterwards the Boulevard Beaumarchais. The Marquise d'Orvillers was the owner of the premises occupied by the thaumaturgist of the eighteenth century. Her father, M. de Chavigny, captain in the royal navy, had built this house on ground acquired in 1719 from Mme. de Harlay, who had inherited it from her father, le Chevalier Boucherat. (See Lefevre, *Old Houses of Paris*, Vol. IV., issue 51, page 24, published by Achille Faure, Paris, 1863.)"

Cagliostro's house is now No. 1, the numbering of the street having been altered during the reign of Louis Philippe. Says M. de Ricaudy:

"The numbering originally began at the Rue Saint Louis, now Rue de Turenne, in which is situated the church of Saint Denis du Sacrement. When the houses were re-numbered with reference to the direction of the current of the Seine (under Louis Philippe), the numbers of the Rue St. Claude, which is parallel to the river, began at the corner of the boulevard, and in that way the former number 30 became number 1."

The sombre old mansion has had a peculiar history. Cagliostro locked the doors of the laboratories and séance-chambre some time in June, 1786, on the occasion of his exile from France. All during the great Revolution the house remained closed and intact. Twenty-four years of undisturbed repose passed away. The

dust settled thick upon everything; spiders built their webs upon the gilded ceilings of the salons. Finally, in the Napoleonic year 1810, the doors of the temple of magic and mystery were unfastened, and the furniture and rare curios, the retorts and crucibles, belonging to the dead conjurer, were auctioned off. An idle crowd of curious *quid nuncs* gathered to witness the sale and pry about. Says Ricaudy:

"The household furniture, belongings, etc., of the illustrious adventurer were not sold until five years after his death. The sale took place in the apartment which he had occupied, and was by order of the municipal government. An examination revealed many curious acoustical and optical arrangements constructed in the building by Cagliostro. By the aid of these contrivances and that of well-trained confederates, he perpetrated many supposedly magical effects, summoned the shades of the dead," etc. (See *Dictionnaire de la France*. By A. G. de St. Fargeau, Vol. III., page 245. Paris, 1851.)

Says Lenôtre:

"Since the auctioning of Cagliostro's effects the gloomy house of the Rue St. Claude has had no history. Ah, but I am mistaken. In 1855 some repairs were made. The old carriage door was removed, and the one that took its place was taken from the ruins of the Temple. There it stands today with its great bolts and immense locks. The door of the prison of Louis XVI. closes the house of Cagliostro."

M. de Ricaudy verifies this statement about the door of the mansion. The student of Parisian archæology will do well to consult M. de Ricaudy, as well as M. Labreton, 93 Boulevard Beaumarchais, who possesses forty volumes relating to the history of the Marais Quarter. Last but not least is the indefatigable student of ancient landmarks of Paris, M. G. Lenôtre, author of *Paris révolutionnaire, vieilles maisons, vieux papiers, ire série*.

My friend, M. Félicien Trewey, who visited the place in the summer of 1901, at my request, reported to me that it had been converted into a commercial establishment. The salons were cut up into small apartments. The laboratories and the *chambre égyptienne* where the great sorcerer held his séances were no more. A grocer, a feather curler, and a manufacturer of cardboard boxes occupied the building, oblivious of the fact that the world-renowned Cagliostro once lived there, plying his trade of sorcerer, mesmerist, physician, and mason, like a true *chevalier d'industrie*. Alas! the history of these old mansions! They

have their days of splendid prosperity, followed by shabby gentility and finally by sordid decay,—battered, blear-eyed, and repulsive looking.

According to Henri d'Almeras (*Cagliostro, et la franc-maçonnerie et l'occultisme au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*), Cagliostro's apartment on the second floor of the house was occupied in the year 1904 by a watchmaker. Two famous watchmakers became conjurers, one after having read an old book on natural magic, the other after having seen a performance of the Davenport Brothers. I allude to Robert-Houdin and Jno. Nevil Maskelyne. Watch-making leads naturally to the construction of automata and magical illusions. The young horologist of the Rue Saint Claude has every excuse to become a prestidigitateur. He works in an atmosphere of necromancy in that old house haunted by its memories of the past. If this does not influence him to enter the magic circle, nothing else will.

People pass and repass this ghost-house of the Rue Saint Claude every day, but not one in a hundred knows that the great enchanter once resided there and held high court. If those dumb walls could but speak, what fascinating stories of superstition and folly they might unfold to our wondering ears! Yes, in this ancient house, dating back to pre-Revolutionary Paris, to the old régime, the great necromancer known as Cagliostro lived in the zenith of his fame. In these golden years of his life, was he never haunted by disturbing visions of the dungeons of the Holy Inquisition, yawning to receive him? Ah, who can tell? Thanks to the gossipy memoir writers of the period, I am able to give a pen portrait, composite, if you will, of some of the scenes that were enacted in the antiquated mansion.

It is night. The lanterns swung in the streets of old Paris glimmer fitfully. Silence broods over the city with shadowy wings. No sound is heard save the clank of the patrol on its rounds. The Rue Saint Claude, however, is all bustle and confusion. A grand "soirée magique" is being held at the house of Monsieur le Comte de Cagliostro. Heavy old-fashioned carriages stand in front of the door, with coachmen lolling sleepily on the boxes, and linkboys playing rude games with each other in the kennel. A rumble in the street—ha, there, lackeys! out of

the way! Here comes the coach of my Lord Cardinal, Prince Louis de Rohan. There is a flash of torches. Servants in gorgeous liveries of red and gold, with powdered wigs, open the door of the vehicle, and let down the steps with a crash. Monseigneur le Cardinal, celebrant of the mass in the royal palace at Versailles, man of pleasure and alchemist, descends. He is enveloped in a dark cloak, as if to court disguise, but it is only a polite pretense. He enters the mansion of his bosom friend, Cagliostro the magician. Within, all is a blaze of light. A life-size bust of the divine Cagliostro ornaments the foyer. Visitors are received in a handsomely furnished apartment on the second floor. Beyond that is the séance-room, a mysterious chamber hung with somber drapery. Wax candles in tall silver sconces, arranged about the place in mystic pentagons and triangles, illuminate the scene.

In the center of the room is a table with a black cloth, on which are embroidered in red the symbols of the highest degree of the Rosicrucians. Upon this strange shekinah is placed the cabalistic apparatus of the necromancer—odd little Egyptian figures of Isis, Osiris, vials of lustral waters, and a large globe full of clarified water. It is all very uncanny. Presently the guests are seated in a circle about the altar, and form a magnetic chain. As the old chroniclers phrase it, to them enters Cagliostro, the Grand Kophta, the man who has lived thousands of years, habited in gorgeous robes like the arch-hierophant of an ancient Egyptian temple. The clairvoyant is now brought in, a child of angelic purity, who was born under a certain constellation, of delicate nerves, great sensitiveness, and, withal, blue eyes. She is bidden to kneel before the globe, and relate what she sees therein. Cagliostro makes passes over her, and commands the genii to enter the water. The very soul of the seeress is penetrated with the magnetic aura emanating from the magician. She becomes convulsed, and declares that she sees events taking place that very moment at the court of Versailles, at Vienna, at Rome.

Every one present is transported with joy. Monseigneur le Cardinal de Rohan is charmed, delighted, and lauds the necromancer to the skies. How weird and wonderful! Albertus

Magnus, Nostradamus and Appolonius of Tyana are not to be compared with the all-powerful Cagliostro. Truly he is the descendant of the Egyptian thaumaturgists.

The séance is followed by a banquet. Rose-leaves are showered over the guests from the gilded ceiling, perfumed water plashes in the fountains, and a hidden orchestra of violins, flutes and harps plays soft melodies. The scene reminds one of the splendid feasts of the Roman voluptuaries in the decadent days of the empire. The lovely Lorenza Feliciani, wife of the enchanter, discourses learnedly of sylphs, salamanders and gnomes, in the jargon of the Rosicrucians. The Cardinal, his veins on fire with love and champagne, gazes amorously at her. But he is thinking all the while of the aristocratic Marie Antoinette, who treats him with such cruel disdain. But Cagliostro has promised to win the Queen for him, to melt her icy heart with love-philters and magical talismans. Let him but possess his soul in patience a little while. All will be well. Aye, indeed, well enough to land the haughty prelate in the Bastille, and start the magician on that downward path to the Inquisition at Rome.

The night wanes. The lights of the banqueting-hall burn lower and lower. Finally the *grandes dames* and the *seigneurs* take their departure. When the last carriage has rolled away into the darkness, Cagliostro and his wife yawn wearily, and retire to their respective sleeping-apartments. The augurs of Rome, says a Latin poet, could not look at each other without laughing. Cagliostro and Lorenza in bidding each other good-night exchange smiles of incalculable cunning. The sphinx masks have dropped from their faces, and they know each other to be—charlatans and impostors, preying upon a superstitious society. The magician is alone. He places his wax light upon an *escritoire*, and throws himself into an arm-chair before the great fireplace, carved and gilded with many a grotesque image. The flames of the blazing logs weave all sorts of fantastic forms on floor and ceiling. The wind without howls in the chimney like a lost spirit. The figures embroidered on the tapestry assume monstrous shapes of evil portent—alguazils, cowed inquisitors, and jailers with rusty keys and chains.

But the magician sees nothing of it all, hears not the warning cry of the wind: he is thinking of his newly hatched lodges of Egyptian occultism, and the golden louis d'or to be conjured out of the strong-boxes of his Parisian dupes.

## GHOST-MAKING EXTRAORDINARY.

"Stay illusion!  
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,  
Speak to me."—SHAKESPEARE: *Hamlet*.

### I.

The French Revolution drew crowds of adventurers to Paris, their brains buzzing with the wildest schemes—political, social, and scientific—which they endeavored to exploit. Among the inventors was a Belgian optician, Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, born at Liège, in 1763, where for many years he had been a professor of physics. He addressed a memorial in the year 1794 to the Government proposing to construct gigantic burning glasses *à la* Archimedes, to set fire to the English fleets, at that period blockading the French seaports. A commission composed of Monge, Lefevre, Gineau and Guyton de Morveau was appointed to investigate the matter, but nothing came of it.

Failing to accomplish his scheme, Robertson turned his attention to other methods of money-making. Four years passed away. Having a decided *penchant* for magic illusions, etc., he set about constructing a ghost-making apparatus. The "Red Terror" was a thing of the past, and people had begun to pluck up courage and seek amusements. Rid to a great extent, of his rival, La Guillotine—the most famous of "ghost-making machines"—Robertson set up his phantasmagoria at the Pavillon de l'Echiquier, and flooded the city with circulars describing his exhibition. Poultier, a journalist and one of the Representatives of the People, wrote an amusing account of the entertainment in the *L'Ami des Lois*, 1798.\* He says:

\*Du 8 germinal au VI—28 Mars, 1798.

"A decenvir of the Republic has said that the dead return no more, but go to Robertson's exhibition and you will soon be convinced of the contrary, for you will see the dead returning to life in crowds. Robertson calls forth phantoms, and commands legions of spectres. In a well-lighted apartment in the Pavilion l'Echiquier I found myself seated a few evenings since, with sixty or seventy people. At seven o'clock a pale, thin man entered the room where we were sitting, and having extinguished the candles he said: 'Citizens, I am not one of those adventurers



ROBERTSON'S GHOST SHOW.

and impudent swindlers who promise more than they can perform. I have assured the public in the *Journal de Paris* that I can bring the dead to life, and I shall do so. Those of the company who desire to see the apparitions of those who were dear to them, but who have passed away from this life by sickness or otherwise, have only to speak; and I shall obey their commands.' There was a moment's silence, and a haggard-looking man, with dishevelled hair and sorrowful eyes, rose in the midst of the assemblage and exclaimed, 'As I have been unable in an official journal to re-establish the worship of Marat, I should at least be glad to see his shadow.' Robertson immediately threw upon



a brazier containing lighted coals, two glasses of blood, a bottle of vitriol, a few drops of aquafortis, and two numbers of the *Journal des Hommes Libres*, and there instantly appeared in the midst of the smoke caused by the burning of these substances, a hideous livid phantom armed with a dagger and wearing a red



ROBERTSON'S ILLUSION ON A SMALL SCALE.  
(From a French Print.)

cap of liberty. The man at whose wish the phantom had been evoked seemed to recognize Marat, and rushed forward to embrace the vision, but the ghost made a frightful grimace and disappeared. A young man next asked to see the phantom of a young lady whom he had tenderly loved, and whose portrait he

showed to the worker of all these marvels. Robertson threw upon the brazier a few sparrow's feathers, a grain or two of phosphorus, and a dozen butterflies. A beautiful woman with her bosom uncovered and her hair floating about her, soon appeared, and smiled on the young man with most tender regard and sorrow. A grave looking individual sitting close by me suddenly exclaimed, 'Heavens! it's my wife come to life again,' and he rushed from the room, apparently fearing that what he saw was not a phantom."

One evening one of the audience, avowing himself to be a Royalist, called for the shade of the martyred king, Louis XVI. Here was a dilemma for citizen Robertson. Had he complied with the request and evoked the royal ghost, prison and possibly the guillotine would have been his fate.

But the magician was foxy. He suspected a trap on the part of a police agent in disguise, who had a spite against him. He replied as follows: "Citizens, I once had a recipe for bringing dead kings to life, but that was before the 18th Fructidor, when the Republic declared royalty abolished forever. On that glorious day I lost my magic formula, and fear that I shall never recover it again."

In spite of Robertson's clever retort, the affair created such a sensation that on the following day, the police prohibited the exhibitions, and placed seals on the optician's boxes and papers. However, the ban was soon lifted, and the performances allowed to continue. Lucky Robertson! The advertisement filled his coffers to overflowing. People struggled to gain admission to the wonderful phantasmagoria.

Finding the Pavilion too small to accommodate the crowds, the magician moved his show to an abandoned chapel of the Capuchin Convent, near the Place Vendôme. This ancient place of worship was located in the middle of a vast cloister crowded with tombs and funeral tablets.

A more gruesome spot could not have been selected. The Chapel was draped in black. From the ceiling was suspended a sepulchral lamp, in which alcohol and salt were burned, giving forth a ghastly light which made the faces of the spectators

resemble those of corpses. Robertson, habited in black, made his appearance, and harangued his audience on ghosts, witches, sorcery, and magic. Finally the lamp was extinguished and the apartment plunged in Plutonian darkness. A storm of wind and rain, thunder and lightning, interspersed with the tolling of a church bell, followed, and after this the solemn strains of a far-off organ were heard. At the evocation of the conjurer, phantoms of Voltaire, Mirabeau, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Robespierre, Danton, and Marat appeared and faded away again "into thin air." The ghost of Robespierre was shown rising from a tomb. A flash of lightning, vivid and terrible, would strike the phantom, whereupon it would sink down into the ground and vanish.

People were often carried away fainting from the exhibition. It was truly awe inspiring and perfect in *mise en scène*.

At the conclusion of the séance, Robertson used to remark: "I have shown you, citizens, every species of phantom, and there is but one more truly terrible spectre—the fate which is reserved for us all. Behold!" In an instant there stood in the center of the room a skeleton armed with a scythe. It grew to a colossal height and gradually faded away.\*

Sir David Brewster, in his work on natural magic, has the following to say about concave mirrors and the art of phantasmagoria: "Concave mirrors are distinguished by their property of forming in front of them, and in the air, inverted images of erect objects, or erect images of inverted objects, placed at some distance beyond their principal focus. If a fine transparent cloud of blue smoke is raised, by means of a chafing dish, around the focus of a large concave mirror, the image of any highly illuminated object will be depicted in the middle of it, with great beauty. A skull concealed from the observer is sometimes used to surprise the ignorant; and when a dish of fruit has been depicted in a similar manner, a spectator, stretching out his hand to seize it, is met with the image of a drawn dagger which has been quickly substituted for the fruit at the other conjugate focus of the mirror."

\*For a romance embracing the subject of phantasmagoria see the poet Schiller's *Ghost-Seer*. (Bohn Library.)

Thoroughly conversant with the science of optics, it is more than probable that Robertson made use of large concave mirrors to project inverted phantoms of living persons in the air, with convex lenses to restore the ghosts to an upright position. If he merely used painted images, which is the more likely, then he had resort to the phantasmagoric magic lantern, rolling upon a small track. Pushing this contrivance backwards and forwards caused the images to lessen or increase, to recede or advance.

Robertson realized quite a snug fortune out of his ghost exhibition and other inventions. His automaton speaking figure, called *le phonorganon*, uttered two hundred words of the French language. Another interesting piece of mechanism was his Trumpeter. These two machines formed part of a beautiful *Cabinet de Physique* in his house, the Hotel d' Yorck, Boulevard Montmartre, No. 12 Paris. He has left some entertaining memoirs, entitled *Mémoires récréatifs et anecdotes* (1830-1834), copies of which are exceedingly rare. He was a great aeronaut and invented the parachute which has been wrongly attributed to Garnerin.

Robertson, as *Commandant des Acrostiers*, served in the French army, and rendered valuable service with his balloons in observing the movements of the enemy in the campaigns in Belgium and Holland, under General Jourdain. In the year 1804 he wrote a treatise on ballooning, entitled, *La Minerve, vaisseau Aérien destiné aux découvertes, et proposé, à toutes les Académies de l'Europe*, published at Vienna. He died at Batignolles (Paris) in 1837.

In his memoirs, Robertson describes a species of optical toy called the Phantascope, for producing illusions on a small scale. This may give a clue to his spectres of the Capuchin Convent. He also offers an explanation of Nostradamus' famous feat of conjuring up the likeness of Francis I. in a magic mirror, for the edification of the beautiful Marie de Médici.

## II.

We now come to the greatest of all ghost-shows, that of the Polytechnic Institute, London. In the year 1863 letters patent

were granted to Professor John Henry Pepper, professor of chemistry in the London Polytechnic Institute, and Henry Dircks, civil engineer, for a device "for projecting images of living persons in the air." Here were no concave mirrors, no magic lanterns, simply a large sheet of unsilvered glass. The effect is founded on a well-known optical illusion. "In the evening carry a lighted candle to the window and you will see reflected in the pane, not only the image of the candle, but that of your hand and face as well. A sheet of glass, inclined at a certain angle, is placed on a stage between the actors and spectators. Beneath the stage and just in front of the glass, is a person robed in a white shroud, and illuminated by the brilliant rays of the electric or the oxy-hydrogen light. The image of the actor who plays the part of spectre, being reflected by the glass, becomes visible to the spectators, and stands, apparently, just as far behind the glass as its prototype is placed in front of it. This image is only visible to the audience. The actor who is on the stage sees nothing of it, and in order that he may not strike at random in his attacks on the spectre, it is necessary to mark beforehand on the boards the particular spot at which, to the eyes of the audience, the phantom will appear. Care must be taken to have the theatre darkened and the stage very dimly lighted."

At the Polytechnic Institute the ghost was admirably produced. The stage represented the room of a mediæval student who was engaged in burning the midnight oil. Looking up from his black-letter tome he beheld the apparition of a skeleton. Resenting the intrusion he arose from his chair, seized a sword which was ready to his hand, and aimed a blow at the figure, which vanished, only to return again and again.

The assistant who manipulated the spectre wore a cover of black velvet. He held the real skeleton in his arms, and made the fleshless bones assume the most grotesque attitudes. He had evidently studied Holbein's "Dance of Death." The lower part of the skeleton, from the pelvis downward, was dressed in white linen, presumably a shroud. To the audience the figure seemed to vanish and reappear through the floor.

This ghost-making apparatus has been used with splendid success in the dramatizations of Dickens' *Christmas Carol* and *Haunted Man*; Bulwer's *Strange Story*; and Alexander Dumas' *Corsican Brothers*.

"In the course of the same year (1863)," says Robert-Houdin in his *Les Secrets de la prestidigitation et de la magie*, "M. Hostein, manager of the Imperial Châtelet Theatre, purchased\* from M. Pepper the secret of the 'Ghost,' in order to introduce it into a drama entitled *Le Secret de Miss Aurore* [a French adaptation of "Aurora Floyd"]. M. Hostein spared no expense in order to ensure the success of the illusion. Three enormous sheets of unsilvered glass, each five yards square, were placed side by side, and presented an ample surface for the reflection of the ghost-actor and his movements. Two Drummond lights (oxy-hydrogen) were used for the purpose of the trick.

"But before the trick was in working order at its new destination, several of the Parisian theatres, in the face of letters patent duly granted to M. Pepper, had already advertised performances wherein it was included.

"M. Hostein had no means of preventing the piracy; unluckily for himself, and still more so for the inventor, the plagiarists had discovered among the French official records a patent taken out, ten years before, by a person named Séguin for a toy called the *Polyoscope*, which was founded on the same principle as the ghost illusion."

Professor Pepper claims to have been totally unaware of the existence of M. Séguin's Polyoscope. In his *True History of the Ghost*, Pepper describes the toy as follows:

"It consisted of a box with a small sheet of glass placed at an angle of forty-five degrees, and it reflected a concealed table, with plastic figures, the spectres of which appeared behind the glass, and which young people who possessed the toy invited their companions to take out of the box, when they melted away, as it were, in their hands and disappeared."

In France, at that time, all improvements on a patent fell to the original patentee, and Pepper found himself out-of-court.

\*He paid 20,000 francs for the invention.

The conjurer Robin claims, on very good authority, to have been the original inventor of the ghost illusion. He writes as follows:

"I first had the idea of producing the apparitions in 1845. Meeting innumerable difficulties in carrying out my invention I was obliged to wait until 1847 before reaching a satisfactory result. In that year I was able to exhibit the 'spectres' to the public in the theatres of Lyons and Saint Etienne under the name of 'The living phantasmagoria.' To my great astonishment I produced little effect. The apparitions still were in want of certain improvements which I have since added. After succeeding in perfecting them I met with great success in exhibiting them in Venice, Rome, Munich, Vienna and Brussels, but as my experiments were very costly I was obliged to lay them aside for some time."

He further declares that M. Séguin, who had been employed by him to paint phantasmagoric figures, had based his toy, the Polyoscope, upon the principle of his (Robin's) spectres. Robin was one of the managers who brought out the illusion in Paris, despite the protests of M. Hostein. He opposed Hostein with the patent of the Polyoscope and some of his old theatre posters of the year 1847, advertising the "living phantasmagoria."

Houdin is rather severe on M. Robin when he classes him among the plagiarists and pirates. But the two conjurers were great rivals. M. Caroly, editor of the *Illusioniste*, in an article on Robin, suggests that perhaps Pepper had seen and examined a Polyoscope, and built upon it the theatrical illusion of the ghost. My personal belief is that Professor Pepper was ignorant of the existence of the toy as well as of Robin's former exhibitions of phantasmagoria, and independently thought out the ghost illusion. This frequently happens among inventors, as every one knows, who has dealings with the U. S. Patent Office.

In the year 1868, there was exhibited in Paris, at the Ambigu Theatre, the melodrama of "La Czarine," founded on Robert-Houdin's story of Kempelen's Automaton Chess Player. In this play was a remarkable use of the "ghost illusion," arranged by Houdin, as well as a chess-playing automaton. I quote as fol-

lows from Houdin's *Les Secrets de la prestidigitation et de la magie*, Chapter VI: "My collaborators, Messrs. Adenis and Gastineau, had asked me to arrange a 'ghost effect' for the last act. I had recourse to the 'ghost illusion', but I presented it in such guise as to give it a completely novel character, as the reader will be enabled to judge from the following description: The scene is laid in Russia, in the reign of Catherine II. In the last act, an individual named Pougatcheff, who, on the strength of a personal likeness to Peter III, attempts to pass himself off as the deceased monarch, is endeavoring to incite the Russian populace to dethrone Catherine. A learned man, M. de Kempelen, who is devoted to the Czarina, succeeds, by the aid of scientific expedients, in neutralizing the villainous designs of the sham prince.

"The scene is a savage glen, behind which is seen a background of rugged rocks. Pougatcheff appears, surrounded by a crowd of noisy adherents. M. de Kempelen comes forward, denounces the impostor, and declares that, to complete his confusion, he will call up the spirit of the genuine Peter III. At his command a sarcophagus appears from the solid rock; it stands upright on end. The lid opens, and exhibits a corpse covered with a winding sheet. The tomb falls to the ground, but the phantom remains erect. The sham Czar, though a good deal frightened, makes a pretence of defying the apparition, which he treats as a mere illusion. But the upper part of the winding sheet falls aside, and reveals the livid and moulding features of the late sovereign. Pougatcheff, thinking that he can hardly be worsted in a fight with a corpse, draws his sword, and with one blow cuts off its head, which falls noisily to the ground; but at the very same moment the living head of Peter III appears on the ghostly shoulders. Pougatcheff, driven to frenzy by these successive apparitions, makes at the figure, seizes it by its garments, and thrusts it violently back into the tomb. But the head remains suspended in space, rolling its eyes in a threatening manner, and appearing to offer defiance to its persecutor. The frenzy of Pougatcheff reaches its culminating point. Grasping his sword with both hands, he tries to cleave in twain the



head of his mysterious adversary; but his blade only passes through a shadowy being, who laughs to scorn his impotent rage. Again he raises his sword, but at the same moment the body of Peter III, in full imperial costume, and adorned with all the insignia of his rank, becomes visible beneath the head. The re-animate Czar hurls the impostor violently back, exclaiming, in a voice of thunder. 'Hold sacrilegious wretch!' Pougatcheff, terror-stricken, and overwhelmed with confusion, confesses his imposture, and the phantom vanishes.

"The stage arrangements to produce these effects are as follows: An actor, robed in the brilliant costume of Peter III, reclines against the sloped support beneath the stage. His body is covered with a wrapper of black velvet, which is designed to prevent, until the proper moment, any reflection in the glass. His head alone is uncovered, and ready to be reflected in the glass so soon as the rays of the electric light shall be directed upon it.

"The phantom which originally comes out of the sarcophagus is a dummy, whose head is modeled from that of the actor who plays the part of Czar. This head is made readily detachable from the body.

"Everything is placed and arranged in such manner that the dummy image of Peter III shall precisely correspond in position with the person of the actor who plays the part of ghost.

"At the same moment that the head of the former falls to the ground, the electric light is gradually made to shine on the head of the actor who plays the part of Peter III, which being reflected in the glass, appears to shape itself on the body of the dummy ghost. After this latter is hurled to the ground, the veil which hides the body of the actor Czar is quickly and completely drawn away, and the sudden flood of the electric light reflects his whole body where his head alone was previously visible."

As a clever producer of the living and impalpable spectres, Robin had no equal. I will describe two of his effects. The curtain rose, showing a cemetery with tombstones and cenotaphs. It was midnight. A lover entered and stood weeping over the tomb of his dead fiancée. Suddenly she appeared before him

arrayed in a winding sheet which she threw aside, revealing herself in the dress of a bride. He endeavored to embrace her. His arms passed unimpeded through the spectre. Gradually the vision melted away, leaving him grieving and desolate.

The impression produced by this illusion was profound and terrifying. Amid cries of astonishment and fright resounding through the hall, many women fainted or made their escape.

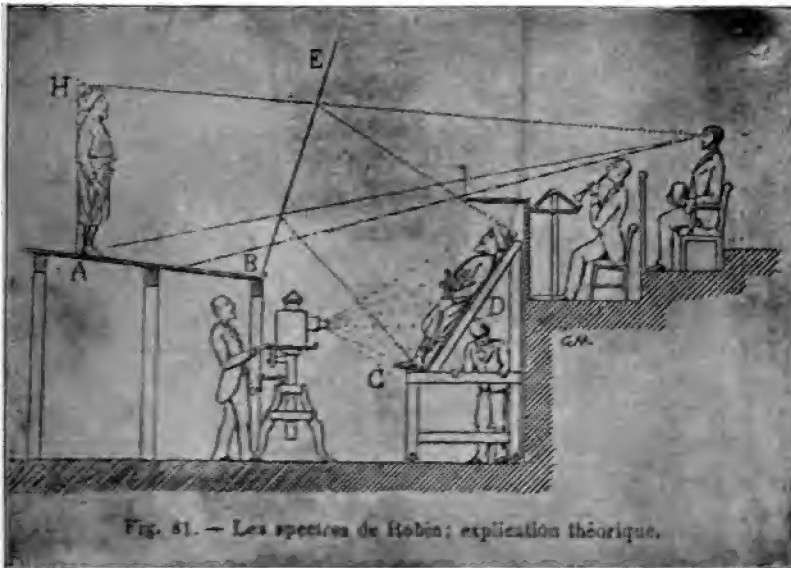


ROBIN'S GHOST-ILLUSION.

Robin devised another scene which he called "The Demon of Paganini." An actor made up to resemble the famous violin virtuoso, Paganini, tall, gaunt, with flowing locks, and dressed in shabby black, was seen reclining upon a couch. A devil, habited in green and red, and armed with a violin, made its appearance and clambered upon the sleeper, installing himself comfortably on the violinist's stomach. Then the demon gave himself up to a violin solo which was not in the least interrupted by the frantic gestures of the nightmare ridden sufferer, whose hands attempted in vain to seize the weird violin and bow. The demon,

sometimes sitting, sometimes kneeling on the body of his victim, continued his musical selection.

The Demon of Paganini was mounted on a special support by which he could be elevated and depressed at pleasure. The violinist, who was the real player, stood below the stage, but in the shade, at one side of the electric lamp which illuminated the demon. The sound issued from the opening in front of the glass.



EXPLANATION OF ROBIN'S GHOST-ILLUSION.

The glass used by Robin measured 5 by 4 meters, in a single piece. It was placed with great care, for the least deviation would be followed by a displacement of the image.

It should be remarked that Robin's auditorium comprised only a sloping parterre surrounded by a range of small boxes. There was no gallery. The spectators, consequently, were not elevated sufficiently to perceive the opening in the stage.

When, in 1866, Robin's Spectres were taken to a large theatre in Paris, the Châtelet, he was obliged to devise a different arrangement, for the spectators in the galleries above were able

to see, at the same time, both the actor and his reflection. Robin had been obliged to place his actor on a lower level because he had no room at the side of his little stage. At the Châtelet, however, space permitted a much more convenient arrangement, for it allowed the actor, who furnished the reflection, to move about freely on a horizontal plane. The glass was placed vertically and formed, on the plane, an angle of about  $45^{\circ}$  with the longitudinal axis of the theatre. The actor was hidden behind a wing; his reflection appeared in the center of the stage toward the back-drop; visible, nevertheless, to all the spectators. His field of movement, necessarily restricted, was marked out in advance upon the floor.

Robin was able to preserve for a considerable time the secret of the ghost illusion; just enough to pique the curiosity of the public. It was guessed at last that he made use of unsilvered glass. The fact became known and several wags proved the presence of the glass by throwing inoffensive paper balls which struck the obstacle and fell, arrested in their flight. Robin was greatly vexed at these occurrences but the trick was none the less exposed.

### III.

Pepper eventually brought out a new illusion called "Metempsychosis," the joint invention of himself and a Mr. Walker. It is a very startling optical effect, and is thus described by me in my American edition of Stanyon's *Magic*: "One of the cleverest illusions performed with the aid of mirrors is that known as the 'Blue Room', which has been exhibited in this country by Kellar. It was patented in the United States by the inventors. The object of the apparatus is to render an actor, or some inanimate thing, such as a chair, table, suit of armor, etc., visible or invisible at will. 'It is also designed,' says the specification in the patent office, 'to substitute for an object in sight of the audience the image of another similar object hidden from direct vision without the audience being aware that any such substitution has been made.' For this purpose employ a large mirror—either an ordinary mirror or for some purposes, by preference, a large sheet

of plate-glass—which is transparent at one end and more and more densely silvered in passing from this toward the other end. Mount this mirror or plate so that it can, at pleasure, be placed diagonally across the stage or platform. As it advances, the glass obscures the view of the actor or object in front of which it passes, and substitutes the reflection of an object in front of the glass, but suitably concealed from the direct view of the audience.

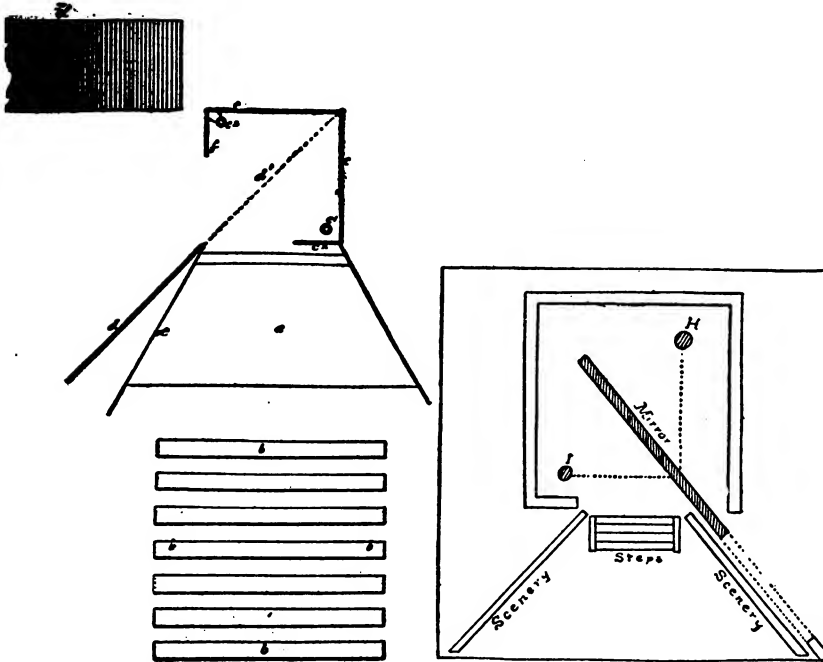


FIG. 1. APPARATUS.

FIG. 2 ARMOR SCENE

DIAGRAM OF BLUE ROOM.

“When the two objects or sets of objects thus successively presented to the view are properly placed and sufficiently alike, the audience will be unaware that any change has been made. In some cases, in place of a single sheet of glass, two or more sheets may be employed.”

By consulting Fig. 1, the reader will understand the construction of the illusion, one of the best in the repertoire of the con-

jurer. The shaded drawing in the left upper part, represents a portion of the mirror, designed to show its graduated opacity.

"*a* is a stage. It may be in a lecture-room or theatre. *bb*, the seats for the audience in front of the stage. *cc* is a small room—eight or ten feet square and eight high will often be sufficiently large; but it may be of any size. It may advantageously be raised and approached by two or three steps from the stage *a*.

"*d* is a vertical mirror, passing diagonally across the chamber *c* and dividing it into two parts, which are exact counterparts the one of the other. The mirror *d* is so mounted that it can be rapidly and noiselessly moved diagonally across the chamber in the path represented by the dotted line *d*<sup>1</sup>, and be withdrawn whenever desired. This can conveniently be done by running it in guides and upon rollers to and from a position where it is hidden by a screen, *e*, which limits the view of the audience in this direction.

"In consequence of the exact correspondence of the two parts of the chamber *c*, that in front and that behind the mirror, the audience will observe no change in appearance when the mirror is passed across.

"The front of the chamber is partially closed at *cx* by a shield or short partition-wall, either permanently or whenever required. This is done in order to hide from direct view any object which may be at or about the position *c*<sup>1</sup>.

"The illusions may be performed in various ways—as, for example, an object may, in the sight of the audience, be passed from the stage to the position *c*<sup>2</sup>, near the rear short wall or counter-part shield *f*, diagonally opposite to and corresponding with the front corner shield *ex*, and there be changed for some other. This is done by providing beforehand a dummy at *c*<sup>1</sup>, closely resembling the object at *c*<sup>2</sup>. Then when the object is in its place, the mirror is passed across without causing any apparent change. The object, when hidden, is changed for another object externally resembling the first, the mirror is withdrawn, and the audience may then be shown in any convenient way that the object now before them differs from that which their eyesight would lead them to suppose it to be.

"We prefer, in many cases, not to use an ordinary mirror, *d*, but one of graduated opacity. This may be produced by removing the silvering from the glass in lines; or, if the glass be silvered by chemical deposition, causing the silver to be deposited upon it in lines, somewhat as represented in Fig. 1. Near one side of the glass the lines are made fine and open, and progressively in passing toward the other side they become bolder and closer until a completely-silvered surface is reached. Other means for obtaining a graduated opacity and reflecting power may be resorted to.

"By passing such a graduated mirror between the object at  $c^2$  and the audience, the object may be made to fade from the sight, or gradually to resolve itself into another form."

Hopkins in his fine work on *Magic, stage illusions, etc.*, to which I contributed the Introduction and other chapters, thus describes one of the many effects which can be produced by the Blue Room apparatus. The curtain rises, showing "the stage set as an artist's studio. Through the centre of the rear drop scene is seen a small chamber in which is a suit of armor standing upright. The floor of this apartment is raised above the level of the stage and is approached by a short flight of steps. When the curtain is raised a servant makes his appearance and begins to dust and clean the apartments. He finally comes to the suit of armor, taking it apart, cleans and dusts it, and finally reunites it. No sooner is the armor perfectly articulated than the soulless mailed figure deals the servant a blow. The domestic, with a cry of fear, drops his duster, flies down the steps into the large room, the suit of armor pursuing him, wrestling with him, and kicking him all over the stage. When the armor considers that it has punished the servant sufficiently, it returns to its original position in the small chamber, just as the master of the house enters, brought there by the noise and cries of the servant, from whom he demands an explanation of the commotion. Upon being told, he derides the servant's fear, and, to prove that he was mistaken, takes the suit of armor apart, throwing it piece by piece upon the floor."

It is needless, perhaps, to explain that the armor which becomes endowed with life has a man inside of it. When the

curtain rises a suit of armor is seen in the Blue Room, at H, (Fig. 2). At I is a second suit, concealed behind the proscenium. It is the duplicate of the visible one. When the mirror is shoved diagonally across the room, the armor at H becomes invisible, but the mirror reflects the armor concealed at I, making it appear to the spectators that the suit at H is still in position. An actor dressed in armor now enters behind the mirror, removes the suit of armor at H, and assumes its place. When the mirror is again withdrawn, the armor at H becomes endowed with life. Again the mirror is shoved across the apartment, and the actor replaces the original suit of armor at H. It is this latter suit which the master of the house takes to pieces and casts upon the floor, in order to quiet the fears of the servant. This most ingenious apparatus is capable of many novel effects. Those who have witnessed Professor Kellar's performance will bear witness to the statement. When the illusion was first produced in England a sketch entitled *Curried Prawns* was written for it by the famous comic author, Burnand, editor of *Punch*.

An old gentleman, after having partaken freely of a dish of curried prawns, washed down by copious libations of wine, retires to bed, and very naturally "sees things." Who would not under such circumstances? He has a dreadful nightmare, during which ghosts, goblins, vampires and witches visit him. The effects are produced by the mirror.

#### IV.

When I was searching among the books of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, for material concerning Robertson and others, a very remarkable ghost show was all the rage in the Montmartre Quarter of the city, based on the Pepper illusion. I will endeavor to describe it. It was held at the *Cabaret du Néant*, or Tavern of the Dead. "Anything for a new sensation" is the motto of the Boulevardier. Death is no laughing matter, but the gay Parisian is ready to mock even at the Grim Tyrant, hence the vogue of the Tavern of the Dead. I went to this lugubrious cabaret in company with a student of medicine. He seemed to



think the whole affair a huge joke, but then he was a hair-brained, thoughtless young fellow.

The Inn of Death was located in the Rue Cujas, near by the Rue Champollion. Over its grim black-painted portal burned an ashy blue and brimstone flame. It seemed like entering a charnel house. My student friend led the way down a gloomy passage into a room hung with funeral cloth. Coffins served as tables, and upon each was placed a lighted taper. From the ceiling hung a grewsome-looking chandelier, known as "Robert Maccaire's chandelier." It was formed of skulls and bones. In the skulls were placed lights. The waiters of the cabaret were garbed like *croque-morts* (undertaker's men). In sepulchral tones one of these gloomy-looking garçons, a trifle more cadaverous than his confrères, sidled up to us like a huge black raven and croaked out, "Name your poison, gentlemen. We have on tap distilled grave-worms, deadly microbes, the bacteria of all diseases under the sun," etc. Whatever one called for in this undertaking establishment, the result was the same—beer of doubtful quality. After drinking a bock we descended a flight of grimy stairs to another apartment which was hung with black cloth, ornamented with white tears, like the decorations furnished by the *Pompes Funèbres* (Undertakers' Trust) of Paris, on state occasions. Here we were solemnly greeted by a couple of quasi Capuchin monks with the words: "*Voilà des Machabées!*" We seated ourselves on a wooden bench and waited for the séance to begin. Among the spectators were several students and their grisettes, a little piou-piou (soldier), and a fat gentleman with a waxed moustache and imperial, who might have been a *chef de cuisine* in disguise or a member of the *Académie Française*. A curtain at one end of the room was pulled aside, revealing a stage set to represent a mouldy crypt, in the center of which stood upright an empty coffin. A volunteer being called for, my medical friend agreed to stand in the grim box for the dead. One of the monks wrapped about the young man's body a winding sheet. A strong light was turned on him. Presently a deathly pallor overcame the ruddy hue of health on his cheeks. His face assumed the waxen color of death. His eyes resolved themselves

into cavernous sockets; his nose disappeared; and presently his visage was metamorphosed into a grinning skull. The illusion was perfect. During this ghastly transformation the monks intoned: "*Voilà Machabæus!* He dies! He wastes away! Dust to dust! The eternal worm awaits you all!" A church bell was solemnly tolled and an organ played. The scene would have delighted that stern genius, Hans Holbein, whose Dance of Death has chilled many a human heart. We looked again, and the skeleton in the coffin vanished. "He has risen to Heaven!" cried the Capuchins.

In a little while the figure reappeared. The fleshless skull was merged into the face of my friend. He stepped out of the box, throwing aside the shroud, and greeted me with a merry laugh. Other people volunteered to undergo the death scene. After the exhibition was over one of the Capuchins passed around a skull for penny contributions, and we left the place.

Now for an explanation of the illusion.

A sheet of glass is placed obliquely across the stage in front of the coffin. At the side of this stage, hidden by the proscenium, is another coffin containing a skeleton robed in white. When the electric lights surrounding the first coffin are turned off and the casket containing the skeleton highly illuminated, the spectators see the reflection of the latter in the glass and imagine that it is the coffin in which the volunteer has been placed. To resurrect the man the lights are reversed.

## THE ROMANCE OF AUTOMATA.

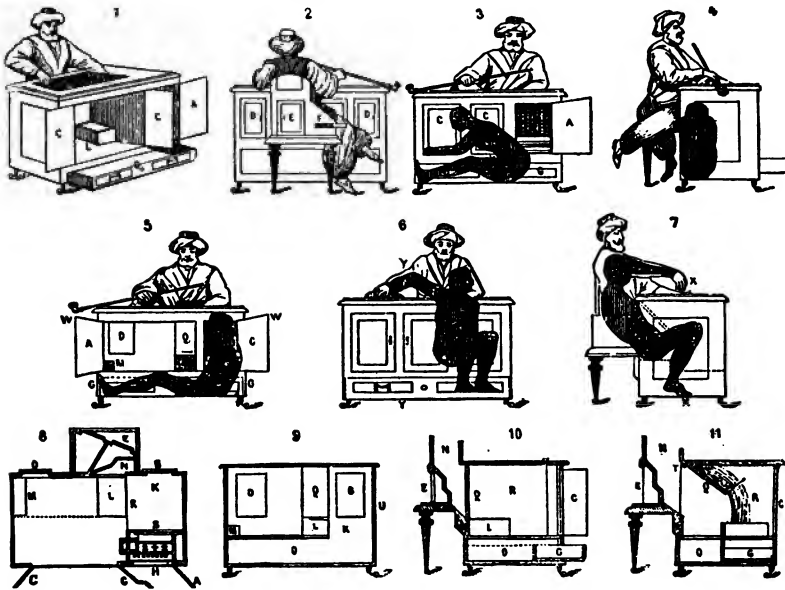
"'What!' I said to myself, 'can it be possible that the marvelous science which raised Vaucanson's name so high—the science whose ingenious combinations can animate inert matter, and impart to it a species of existence—is the only one without its archives?'"—ROBERT-HOUDIN.

### I.

Automata have played an important part in the magic of ancient temples, and in the séances of mediæval sorcerers. Who has not read of the famous "Brazen Head," constructed by Friar Bacon, and the wonderful machines of Albertus Magnus? Modern conjurers have introduced automata into their entertainments with great effect, as witness Pinetti's "Wise Little Turk," Kempelen's "Chess Player," Houdin's "Pastry Cook of the Palais Royal," Kellar's "Hindoo Clock," Maskelyne's "Psycho," etc. But these automata have been such in name only, the motive power usually being furnished by the conjurer's *alter ego*, or concealed assistant.

The so-called automaton Chess Player is enveloped with a halo of romance. It had a remarkable history. It was constructed in the year 1769 by the Baron von Kempelen, a Hungarian nobleman and mechanic, and exhibited by him at the leading courts of Europe. The Empress Maria Theresa of Austria played a game with it. In 1783 it was brought to Paris and shown at the Café de la Regence, the rendezvous of chess lovers and experts, after which it was taken to London. Kempelen died on the 26th of March, 1804, and his son sold the Chess Player to J. N. Maelzel, musician, inventor and mechanic, who was born at Ratisbon, Bavaria, in 1772. His father was a celebrated organ-builder.

Maelzel was the inventor of the Metronome (1815), a piece of mechanism known to all instructors of music: the automaton *Trumpeter* (1808), and the *Pan-Harmonicum* (1805). He had a strange career as the exhibitor of the Chess Player. After showing the automaton in various cities of Europe, Maelzel sold it to Napoleon's step-son, Eugène Beauharnais, the Viceroy of the Kingdom of Italy. But the old love of "adventurous travel with the Turbaned Turk" took possession of him, and he suc-



THE AUTOMATON CHESS PLAYER.

ceeded in buying back the Chess Player from its royal owner. He went to Paris with it in 1817 and 1818, afterwards to London, meeting everywhere with success. In 1826 he brought it to America. The Chess Player excited the greatest interest throughout the United States. Noted chess experts did their best to defeat it, but rarely succeeded.

Now for a description of the automaton.

The audience was introduced into a large room, at one end of which hung crimson curtains. These curtains being drawn aside, Maelzel rolled forward a box on castors. Behind the box or

table, which was two feet and a half high, three feet and a half long, and two feet wide, was seated cross-legged, the figure of a Turk. The chair on which the figure was affixed was permanently attached to the box. At the top of the box was a chess-board. The figure had its eyes fixed intently upon this board, its right hand and arm being extended towards the board, its left, which was somewhat raised, holding a long pipe.

Four doors, two in front, and two in the rear of the box, were opened, and a lighted candle thrust into the cavities. Nothing was to be seen except cog wheels, levers, and intricate machinery. A long drawer, which contained the chessmen and a cushion, was pulled out. Two doors in the Turk's body were thrown open, and the candle held inside, to satisfy the spectators that nothing but machinery was contained therein.

Maelzel wound up the automaton with a large key, took away the pipe, and placed the cushion under the arm of the figure. Curious to relate the automaton played with its left hand. In Von Kempelen's day, the person selected to play with the figure, sat at the same chess-board with it, but Maelzel altered this. A rope separated the machine from the audience, and the player sat at a small table, provided with a chess-board, some ten or twelve feet away from the Turk.

The automaton invariably chose the white chess-men, and made the first move, its fingers opening as the hand was extended towards the board, and the piece picked up and removed to its proper square.

When his antagonist had made his move, the automaton paused and appeared to study the game, before proceeding further. It nodded its head to indicate check to the king. If a false move was made by its opponent, it rapped on the table, and replaced the piece, claiming the move for itself. Maelzel, acting for the human player, repeated his move on the chess-board of the Turk, and when the latter moved, made the corresponding move on the board of the challenger. The whirring of machinery was heard during the progress of the game, but this was simply a blind. It subserved two purposes: *first*, to induce the spectators to believe that the automaton was really operated by ingenious mechanism,

*second*, to disguise the noise made by the concealed confederate as he shifted himself from one compartment to the other, as the various doors were opened and shut in succession. No machine could possibly be constructed to imitate the human mind when engaged in playing chess, or any other mental operation where the indeterminate enters and which requires knowledge and reflection. But the majority of people who saw the automaton did not realize this fact, and pronounced it a *pure machine*.

Signor Blitz, the conjurer, who was intimate with Maelzel, having frequently given entertainments in conjunction with him, was possessed of the secret of the Turk. In his memoirs, he says: "The Chess Player was ingeniously constructed—a perfect counterpart of a magician's trick-table with a variety of partitions and doors, which, while they removed every possible appearance of deception, only produced greater mystery, and provided more security to the invisible player. The drawers and closets were so arranged as to enable him to change his position according to circumstances: at one moment he would be in this compartment; the next in that; then in the body of the Turk."

He says this concealed assistant was named Schlumberger.

This explanation is verified by Professor Allen,\* who was very intimate with Maelzel.

William Schlumberger was a native of Alsace, a remarkable chess expert and linguist. Maelzel picked him up in the Café de la Regence, Paris, where he eked out a meagre living as a teacher of chess.

Occasionally, Schlumberger would over-indulge in wine, and as a result would be beaten, while acting as the motive power of the Turk. "On one occasion," says Professor Allen, "just as Maelzel was bringing the Turk out from behind the curtain, a strange noise was heard to proceed from his interior organization, something between a rattle, a cough, and a sneeze. Maelzel pushed back his ally in evident alarm, but presently brought him forward again, and went on with the exhibition as if nothing had happened."

\*Fiske's *Book of the First American Chess Congress*, New York, 1859. Pp. 420-484.

Schlumberger not only acted as confederate, but served his employer as secretary and clerk.

Edgar Allen Poe, who wrote an exposé of the automaton when it visited Richmond, remarked: "There is a man, Schlumberger, who attends him (Maelzel) wherever he goes, but who has no ostensible occupation other than that of assisting in packing and unpacking of the automaton. Whether he professes to play chess or not, we are not informed. It is quite certain, however, that he is never to be seen during the exhibition of the Chess Player, although frequently visible just before and after the exhibition. Moreover, some years ago Maelzel visited Richmond with his automaton. Schlumberger was suddenly taken ill, and during his illness there was no exhibition of the Chess Player. These facts are well known to many of our citizens. The reason assigned for the suspension of the Chess Player's performances was *not* the illness of *Schlumberger*. The inferences from all this we leave, without further comment, to the reader."

Edgar Allen Poe, the apostle of mystery, certainly hit the nail on the head here, and solved the problem of the automaton.

The Chess Player had the honor of defeating Napoleon the Great—"the Victor in a hundred battles." This was in the year 1809, when Maelzel, by virtue of his office as Mechanician to the Court of Austria, was occupying some portion of the Palace of Schönbrunn, "when Napoleon chose to make the same building his headquarters during the Wagram campaign." A man by the name of Allgaier was the concealed assistant on this occasion. Napoleon was better versed in the art of manœuvring human kings, queens, prelates and pawns on the great chess-boards of diplomacy and battle than moving ivory chessmen on a painted table-top.

Maelzel, in addition to the Chess Player, exhibited his own inventions, which were really automatons, also the famous panorama, "The Burning of Moscow." After a splendid tour throughout the States, he went to Havana, Cuba, where poor Schlumberger died of yellow fever. On the return trip Maelzel himself died, and was buried at sea. This was in 1838.

The famous Turk, with other of Maelzel's effects, was sold

at public auction in Philadelphia. The automaton was bought by Dr. J. K. Mitchell, reconstructed, and privately exhibited by him for the amusement of his friends. Finally it was deposited in the Chinese Museum, where it remained for fourteen years, with the dust accumulating upon it. Here the Chess Player rested from his labors, a superannuated, broken down pensioner, dreaming, if automatons can dream, of his past adventures, until the year 1854. On July 5 of that year a great fire destroyed the Museum, and the Turbaned Turk was burnt to ashes. Better such a fate than rotting to pieces in the cellar of some old warehouse, forgotten and abandoned.

Robert-Houdin, in his autobiography, tells a most romantic story about the Chess Player, the accuracy of which has been seriously doubted. He also makes several errors concerning its career and that of Maelzel. R. Shelton Mackenzie, who translated Houdin's life (1859), calls attention to these mistakes, in his preface to that work. "This remarkable piece of mechanism was constructed in 1769, and not in 1796; it was the Empress Maria-Theresa of Austria who played with it, and not Catherine II of Russia. M. Maelzel's death was in 1838, on the voyage from Cuba to the United States, and not, as M. Houdin says, on his return to France; and the automaton, so far from being taken back to France, was sold at auction here [Philadelphia], where it was consumed in the great fire of July 5, 1854."

I believe that the true history of the Chess Player is related by Prof. George Allen, of the University of Pennsylvania, in Fiske's *Book of the first American Chess Congress*, N. Y., 1859, pp. 420-484.

## II.

Now for Houdin's entertaining story of the Chess Player. In the year 1796, a revolt broke out in a half-Russian, half-Polish regiment stationed at Riga, capital of Livonia, Russia. At the head of the rebels was an officer named Worousky, a man of talent and energy. He was of short stature, but well built. The revolutionists were defeated in a pitched battle and put to flight



by the Russians. Worousky had both thighs shattered by a cannon ball and fell on the battle field. However, he escaped from the general massacre of his comrades by casting himself into a ditch near a hedge, not far from the house of a doctor named Osloff. At nightfall he dragged himself with great difficulty to the house, and was taken in by the benevolent physician, who promised to conceal him. Osloff eventually had to amputate both of Worousky's legs, close to the body. The operation was successful. During this time, the famous Baron von Kempelen came to Russia, and paid Dr. Osloff a visit. He also took compassion upon the crippled Polish officer. It seems that Worousky was a master of the game of chess, and repeatedly defeated Osloff and Kempelen. Kempelen then conceived the idea of the automaton chess player, as a means of assisting Worousky to escape from Russia, and immediately set about building it. It was completed in June, 1796. In order to avert suspicion Osloff and Kempelen determined to play at several of the smaller towns and cities before reaching the frontier.

The first performance was given at Toula. Says Houdin: "I possess a copy of the original bill, which was given me by M. Hessler, nephew of Dr. Osloff, who also supplied me with all these details. Worousky won every game he played at Toula, and the papers were full of praises of the automaton. Assured of success by the brilliancy of their defeat, M. de Kempelen and his companion proceeded towards the frontier."

Worousky was concealed from sight, while traveling, in the enormous chest which held the Chess Player. Air holes were made in the sides of the chest to enable him to breathe. They arrived without adventure at Vitebsk, on the road to the Prussian frontier, when a letter came concerning them to the imperial palace at St. Petersburg. The Empress Catherine II, having heard of the automaton's wonderful talent, desired to play a game with it. They dared not refuse this demand. Worousky also had a price set on his head, was the object of the chase and seemed delighted at the idea of playing with the Empress. After fifteen days travel they reached St. Petersburg. Kempelen had the automaton carried to the place by the same chest in which

it traveled, thereby secretly conveying Worousky thither. The Chess Player was set up in the library, and at the appointed hour Catherine II, followed by a numerous suite, entered and took her place at the chess-board. The members of the Court took their places behind the Empress. Kempelen never allowed anyone to pass behind the automaton, and would not consent to begin the game till all the spectators were in front of the board.

"The chest and the Turk's body were then examined, and when all were perfectly convinced they contained nothing but clockwork, the game began. It proceeded for some time in perfect silence, but Catherine's frowning brow speedily revealed that the automaton was not very gallant towards her, and fully deserved the reputation it had gained. The skillful Mussulman captured a bishop and a knight, and the game was turning much to the disadvantage of the lady, when the Turk, suddenly forgetting his dignified gravity, gave a violent blow on his cushion, and pushed back a piece his adversary had just moved.

"Catherine II had attempted to cheat; perhaps to try the skill of the automaton, or for some other reason. At any rate the haughty empress, unwilling to confess her weakness, replaced the piece on the same square, and regarded the automaton with an air of imperious authority. The result was most unexpected—the Turk upset all the pieces with a blow of his hand, and immediately the clock work, which had been heard during the whole game, stopped. It seemed as if the machinery had got out of repair. Pale and trembling, M. de Kempelen, recognizing in this Worousky's impetuous temper, awaited the issue of this conflict between the insurgent and his sovereign.

"'Ah, ah! my good automaton! your manners are rather rough,' the Empress said, good humoredly, not sorry to see a game she had small chance of winning end thus. 'Oh! you are a famous player, I grant; but you were afraid of losing the game, and so prudently upset the pieces. Well, I am now quite convinced of your skill and your violent character.'

"M. de Kempelen began to breathe again, and regaining courage, tried to remove the unfavorable impression which the little

respect shown by the automaton must have produced. Hence he said, humbly :

“ ‘Will your majesty allow me to offer an explanation of what has just happened?’

“ ‘By no means, M. de Kempelen,’ Catherine said, heartily,— ‘by no means; on the contrary, I find it most amusing, and your automaton pleases me so much that I wish to purchase it. I shall thus always have near me a player, somewhat quick perhaps, but yet able to hold his own. You can leave it here tonight, and come tomorrow morning to arrange the price.’

“There is strong reason to believe that Catherine wished to commit an indiscretion when she evinced a desire that the figure should remain at the palace till next morning. Fortunately, the skillful mechanician managed to baffle her feminine curiosity by carrying Worousky off in the big chest. The automaton remained in the library, but the player was no longer there.

“The next day Catherine renewed her proposition to purchase the Chess Player, but Kempelen made her understand that, as the figure could not perform without him, he could not possibly sell it. The empress allowed the justice of these arguments; and, while complimenting the mechanician on his invention, made him a handsome present.

“Three months after the automaton was in England, under the management of Mr. Anthon, to whom Kempelen had sold it. I know not if Worousky was still attached to it, but I fancy so, owing to the immense success the Chess Player met with. Mr. Anthon visited the whole of Europe, always meeting with the same success; but, at his death, the celebrated automaton was purchased by Maelzel, who embarked with it for New York. It was then, probably, Worousky took leave of his hospitable Turk, for the automaton was not nearly so successful in America. After exhibiting his mechanical trumpeter and Chess Player for some time, Maelzel set out again for France, but died on the passage, of an attack of indigestion. His heirs sold his apparatus, and thus Cronier obtained his precious relic.” The Chess Player caused the greatest amount of discussion in its time. At the solicitation of a leading theatrical manager of Paris, Houdin

arranged the trick for a melodrama, in which Catherine II of Russia was one of the characters.

### III.

I now come to the celebrated inventions of Maskelyne which were exhibited at Egyptian Hall, London. First on the list comes the automaton whist player, "Psycho," which far exceeds



J. N. MASKELYNE

the Chess Player of Von Kempelen in ingenious construction. Its secret has never been divulged.

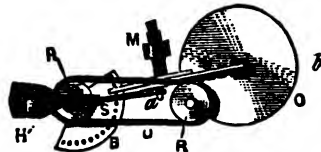
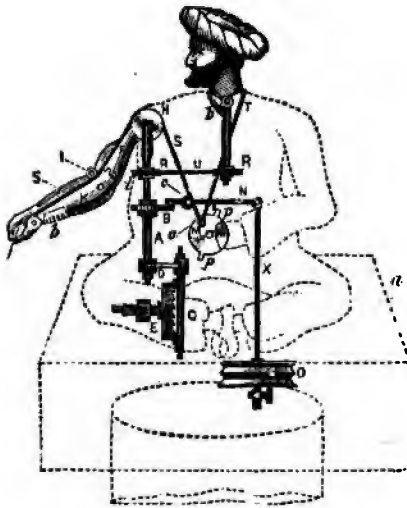
Says the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: "In 1875 Maskelyne and Cooke produced at the Egyptian Hall, in London, an automaton whist player, 'Psycho,' which from the manner in which it is placed upon the stage, appears to be perfectly isolated from any

mechanical communication from without . . . . The arm has all the complicated movements necessary for chess or draught playing; and 'Psycho' calculates any sum up to a total of 99,000,000. . . . 'Psycho', an Oriental figure, sitting cross-legged on a box, is supported by a single large cylinder of clear glass, which as originally exhibited, stood upon the carpet of the stage, but was afterwards set loose upon a small stool, having solid wood feet; moreover, this automaton may be placed in almost any number of different ways. . . . It may be mentioned that in the same year in which 'Psycho' appeared, the joint inventors patented a method of controlling the speed of clock-work mechanism by compressed air or gas stored in the pedestal of an automaton, this compressed air acting upon a piston in a cylinder and also upon a rotating fan when a valve is opened by 'an electrical or other connection worked by the foot of the performer or an assistant.' But it is not known whether the principle obscurely described in the specification was applicable in any way to the invisible agency employed in 'Psycho,' or whether it had reference to some other invention which has never been realized."

A very clever exposé of "Psycho" was published in an English newspaper, November, 1877. That it is the correct one, I am by no means certain. But an ingenious mechanic by carrying out its provisions would be enabled to construct an excellent imitation of the Maskelyne so-called automaton.

"In Figs. 1*a* and 1*b* (elevation and plan), the wheels E and M have each a train of clockwork (left out for the sake of clearness), which would cause them to spin round if unchecked. M, however, has two pins, *p p*, which catch on a projection on the lever, N. E is a crown-wheel escapement—like that in a bottle roasting-jack—which turns A alternately to the left and right, thus causing the hand to traverse the thirteen cards. A little higher up on A will be seen a quadrant, B (see plan), near the edge of which are set thirteen little pins. The end of the lever, N, drops between any two of them, thus causing the hand to stop at any desired card. The lever being pivoted at *c*, it is obvious that by depressing the end, N, B " " " " at liberty,

and the hand will move along the cards; by slightly raising it this motion will be arrested; by raising it still more the pin, *p*, is released, and *M* commences to revolve, and by again depressing *N* this wheel will, in its turn, be stopped. Near the bottom of the apparatus is a bellows, *O*, which contains a spring tending to keep the lever, *N*, with which it is connected by a rod, *X*, in



FIGS. 1a, 1b.

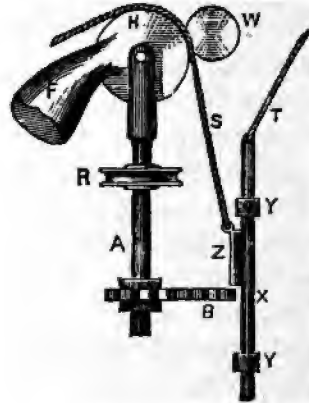


FIG. 2.

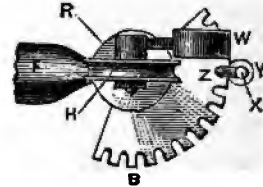


FIG. 3.



FIG. 4.

the position shown. This is connected with the tubular support, which may be connected by a tube through the leg of the stool, and another tube beneath the stage, with an assistant behind the scenes. By compressing or exhausting air through this tube it is obvious that the lever, *N*, will be raised or depressed, and the clockwork set going accordingly. *a* is a crank-pin set in *M*, and connected with the head by catgut, *T*, and with the thumb by *S*. At *R* and *R* are two pulleys connected by gut. Thus if the

hand moves round, the head appears to follow its motions, and when raised by pulling S, the head rises also by means of T. Further explanation seems almost unnecessary; *l* is a stop to prevent the elbow moving too far, and *b b* spiral springs, to keep the thumb open and the head forward respectively. When N is raised, M pulls T and S, the latter closing the thumb, and then raising the arm by pulley H. If the lever is allowed to drop, *p* will catch and keep the arm up. On again raising N, the arm will descend.

"In addition to the above contrivance, we have in Figs. 2 and 3 another and simpler arrangement, in which only one train of clockwork is used. On the same axle as H is fixed a lever and weight, W, to balance the arm. A vertical rod, X, having a projection, Z, slides up and down in guides, Y Y, and carries the catgut, S and T. The quadrant, B, has cogs cut, between which Z slides and stops the motion of A, which is moved, as before, by clockwork. The lower part of X is connected directly with O. When X is slightly raised, as shown, A is free to move, but on exhausting the air and drawing X down, Z enters the cogs and stops the hand over a card; continuing to exhaust, the thumb closes and the card is lifted up." The details of the clockwork the originator of this solution omits to give. He says there should be a fan on each train to regulate the speed. The figure should be so placed that an assistant can see the cards in the semi-circular rack Fig. 4.

One of Maskelyne's best mechanical tricks is the "Spirit Music-Box," for an exposé of which I am indebted to my friend Mr. Henry V. A. Parsell, of New York City, a lover of the art of magic. The construction of this novel piece of apparatus will afford a clue to many alleged mediumistic performances. Professor Parsons, of New Haven, Conn., is the owner of the box, reproduced in the illustration. Says Mr. Parsell:

"A sheet of plate glass is exhibited freely to the audience and proved to contain no electric wires or mechanism. This glass plate is then suspended horizontally in the center of the stage by four cords hooked to its corners. An ordinary looking music-box is then brought in by the assistant. It is opened, so that

the audience can see the usual mechanism within. The music-box is now placed on the glass plate and the performer comes down among the spectators. Notwithstanding the isolation of the box the command of the performer suffices to cause it to play, or cease, in obedience to his will. It matters not in what part of the room the conjurer goes—his word is enough to make silence or harmony issue from the box, always beginning where it left off and never skipping a note. The simple cause of this marvelous effect lies in the mechanism of the box and in its mode of suspension.

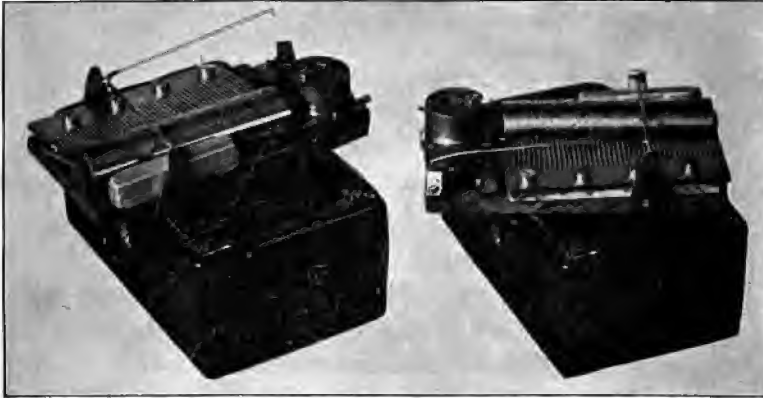


Fig. 5.

THE SPIRIT MUSIC BOX.

Fig. 6.

“A small music box of this kind is shown in Fig. 5. The box is seen with its mechanism removed and resting upon it. In addition to the usual cylinder, comb and wheel-work, there is a device for starting and stopping the box when it is tilted slightly endwise. This consists of a light shaft delicately pivoted and carrying at one end a lead weight (seen just in front of the cylinder), and at the other end an arm of light wire whose far end is bent down so as to engage the fly of the wheel-work. In Fig. 5 the mechanism is tilted so that the wire arm is raised; the fly is now free to revolve and the box plays.

“A front view of the mechanism is shown in Fig. 6. Here the arm is down, arresting the motion of the fly and producing



silence. When the box is resting on the glass plate an assistant behind the scenes causes the plate to tilt slightly up or down by raising or lowering the cords which support one end. The mechanism of the box is so delicately adjusted that an imperceptible motion of the plate is sufficient to control its playing."

#### IV.

John Nevil Maskelyne, a descendant of Nevil Maskelyne, the eminent astronomer and physicist, was born in Cheltenham, England, and like Houdin was apprenticed to a watchmaker. At an early age, he manifested a wonderful aptitude for mechanics. He employed most of his spare time while working at the trade of horology in devising and building optical and mechanical apparatus for show purposes. In this respect his career exactly parallels that of Robert-Houdin. He was likewise interested in sleight of hand tricks, but never carried the art to perfection like the French magician. Later in life he abandoned legerdemain entirely and devoted himself exclusively to the construction of mechanical illusions. In this line, he has no equal. Most of the really clever and original illusions brought out within the past twenty years have emanated from his fertile brain. Houdin, Maskelyne, and Buatier de Kolta are the three great inventors of magic tricks and illusions. One day the Davenport Brothers came to Cheltenham and gave an exhibition of their alleged mediumistic powers at the town hall. Young Maskelyne was selected as one of a committee to tie the Brothers and examine their mystic cabinet. The falling of a piece of drugget, used to exclude light from one of the windows of the hall, enabled Maskelyne to see Ira Davenport eject some of the musical instruments from the cabinet, and re-secure himself with the ropes. Delighted at discovering the trick, the young watchmaker soon devised an imitation of the Davenport exhibition. Aided by a Mr. Cooke, afterwards his partner in the show business, he gave an exposé of the Davenport business, first at Cheltenham, and afterwards throughout England. Subsequently he located at St. James Hall, and afterwards at Egyptian Hall, London. Mr.

Maskelyne was called as an expert witness in the trial of the impostor, Dr. Henry Slade, and performed in the witness-box all of the medium's "slate tests," to the great astonishment of the Court. As a consequence of these revelations, Dr. Slade was sentenced to three months in jail, but he escaped imprisonment owing to legal technicalities interposed by his attorneys, and fled to the Continent. Mr. Maskelyne has written a clever exposé of gambling devices, entitled, *Sharps and Flats*, and various magazine articles on conjuring.

In the year 1904, he and Mr. Cooke moved their show to St. George's Hall, having outgrown the old quarters at Egyptian Hall. Since that time Mr. Cooke died at an advanced age. Associated with Mr. Maskelyne and his son is David Devant, a good sleight of hand performer.

## ROBERT-HOUDIN—CONJURER, AUTHOR AND AMBASSADOR.

"Robert-Houdin was a man of remarkable ingenuity and insight. His autobiography is throughout interesting and psychologically valuable, and his conjuring precepts abound in points of importance to the psychologist."—JOSEPH JASTROW: *"Fact and Fable in Psychology."*

"To Robert-Houdin I feel I owe a double debt; first, for the great satisfaction I have had in such slight skill as I have acquired in his art, and, secondly, for such an insight into its underlying principles as to keep me clear of all danger from evanescent delusions which follow one another in fashion."—BRANDER MATTHEWS: *"Books that have helped me."*

### I.

Nostradamus is said to have constructed a magic mirror of great power. In its shining surface, he conjured up many remarkable visions. But I know of a more wonderful wizard's glass than that of the French necromancer. It is the "mirror of the mind"—that mystery of mysteries. I am able, at will, to evoke in it a phantasmagoria of the past. I need no aid from cabalistic spells, no burning of incense. Presto!—a picture appears radiant with light and life. I see a wainscoted room in a quaint old mansion. Logs are ablaze on the hearthstone. A boy is ensconced in the deep embrasure of the window. He is immersed in a book, and entirely oblivious of the scene without, where the Snow King is busy laying a white pall upon the frozen earth. Snow flakes like white butterflies skim hither and thither. The wind rumbles mournfully in the chimneys like a lost spirit. It is the witching Christmas Tide, when of old the Magi led by the burning star (the weird pentagram of the Initiates) came from afar to visit the lowly cradle of the Nazarene

child. Beautiful old legend! It still haunts these later years of mine, breathing joy and peace ineffable; for is it not an allegory of the search for, and the discovery of, the Lost Word of the Adepts of the Temples—the word that signifies eternal life?

Let us take a peep over the reader's shoulder, at the volume in his hand. It is the autobiography of "Robert-Houdin, conjurer, author, and ambassador." And the reader is myself. O vanished years of boyhood: you still live in the magic mirror of memory! And intimately associated with those years is the mystic book of Robert-Houdin. Can I ever forget the enjoyment I had in poring over the faded yellow leaves of that fascinating work? Happy the youth who early dips into its golden pages. The Arabian Nights forms a fitting prologue to it. I followed Houdin in the Conjurer's Caravan; rejoiced in his successes at the Palais Royal; and in far-off Algeria, watched him exhibiting his magic feats before the Marabouts.

Speaking of this autobiography, Professor Brander Matthews of Columbia College, New York, says: "These *Confidences of a Prestidigitateur* are worthy of comparison with all but the very best autobiographies—if not with Cellini's and Franklin's, at least with Cibber's and Goldoni's. Robert-Houdin's life of himself, quite as well as any of the others, would justify Longfellow's assertion that 'autobiography is what biography ought to be.'"

In my humble opinion Houdin's autobiography is worthy to be classed with the best, even that of Cellini and Franklin; yes, even with Chateaubriand's superb *Memories beyond the Tomb*. It is replete with interesting information about old time necromancers; constructors of automata; good stories of contemporary magicians; exposés of Marabout miracles; and last, but not least, the fascinating adventures of Houdin himself,—the archmaster of modern magic. It bears the stamp of truth on every page, and should be placed in the hands of all students of psychology and pedagogy. His *Trickeries of the Greeks*, an exposé of gambling devices, is also an interesting work and should be read in conjunction with his *Stage Magic* and *Conjuring and Magic*.

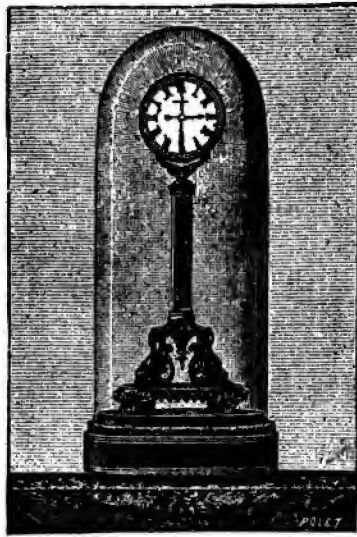
The *Confidences* end with Houdin's retirement from the stage to his villa at St. Gervais, near Blois. The book on *Conjuring*

and *Magic* gives us a slight sketch of his villa and the ingenious contrivances arranged therein for the amusement and mystification of visitors. The curtain, alas, then rings down on the scene. The theatre is left dark and cold. We are told nothing more concerning the great conjurer's life, or the manner of his death. All is a blank. Through my own efforts, however, and those of my friends made in recent years, at my instigation, I have been able to supply the missing data. It is very entertaining indeed. But let us begin at the beginning.

## II.

On a certain day in the year 1843, the Count de l'Escalopier, a scion of the old régime of France, and a great lover of curios, was strolling along the Rue de Vendôme, in the Marais Quarter, of Paris. He stopped to look at some mechanical toys displayed in the window of a dark little shop, over the door of which was painted the following modest sign: "M. Robert-Houdin, Pendules de Précision." This sign noted the fact that the proprietor was a watchmaker, and that his wares were distinguished for precise running. What particularly attracted the nobleman's attention was a peculiar looking clock of clearest crystal that ran apparently without works, the invention of M. Robert-Houdin. The Count, who was a great lover of *science amusante*, or science wedded to recreation, purchased the magic clock, and better than that, made the acquaintance of the inventor, the obscure watchmaker, who was destined to become a great prestidigitateur, author, and ambassador. The Count became a frequent visitor at Houdin's shop, to watch the construction of various automata, which the inventor intended some day to use in public performances. Says Houdin: "A kind of intimacy having thus become established between M. de l'Escalopier and myself, I was naturally led to talk to him of my projects of appearing in public; and, in order to justify them, I had given him, on more than one occasion, specimens of my skill in sleight of hand. Prompted doubtless by his friendly feelings, my spectator steadily applauded me, and gave me the warmest encouragement to put my schemes into actual practice. Count de l'Escalopier, who was the pos-

essor of a considerable fortune, lived in one of those splendid houses which surround the square which has been called *Royale*, or *des Vosges*, according to the color of the flag of our masters of the time being. I myself lived in a humble lodging in the Rue de Vendôme, in the Marais, but the wide disproportion in the style of our respective dwelling-places did not prevent the nobleman and the artist from addressing each other as 'my dear neighbor,' or sometimes even as 'my dear friend.'



Houdin's Magic Clock.\*

\*"The cut represents the magic clock invented by Robert-Houdin about sixty years ago. This very remarkable time-piece consists of a dial composed of two juxtaposed disks of glass, one of which is stationary and carries the hours, while the other is movable and serves for the motion of the hands. This latter disk is provided with a wheel or rather a toothed ring concealed within the metallic ring forming a dial. The glass column which constitutes the body of the piece is formed of two tubes which operate according to the principle of the dial, that is to say, one is stationary and the other movable. To each of the extremities of the latter is fixed a wheel. These wheels gear with transmission pinions which communicate, one of them at the top with the movable plate of glass of the dial, and the other at the bottom with the movement placed in the wooden base which supports the glass shade covering the clock. All these concealed transmissions are arranged in a most skillful manner, and complete the illusion. The movable glass of the dial, carried along by the column, actuates a small dial-train mounted in the thickness of the stationary glass, and within an extremely narrow space in the center of the dial. It is covered by the small hand and is consequently invisible. The hands are very easily actuated by it on account of their extreme lightness and perfect equilibrium."—*Scientific American*, N. Y.

"My neighbor then being, as I have just stated, warmly interested in my projects, was constantly talking of them; and in order to give me opportunities of practice in my future profession, and to enable me to acquire that confidence in which I was then wanting, he frequently invited me to pass the evening in the company of a few friends of his own, whom I was delighted to amuse with my feats of dexterity. It was after a dinner given by M. de l'Escalopier to the Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Affre, with whom he was on intimate terms, that I had the honor of being presented to the reverend prelate as a mechanician and future magician, and that I performed before him a selection of the best of my experiments.

"At that period—I don't say it in order to gratify a retrospective vanity—my skill in sleight of hand was of a high order. I am warranted in this belief by the fact that my numerous audiences exhibited the greatest wonderment at my performance, and that the Archbishop himself paid me, in his own handwriting, a compliment which I can not refrain from here relating.

"I had reserved for the last item of my programme a trick which, to use a familiar expression, I had at my fingers' ends. In effect it was shortly as follows:—After having requested the spectators carefully to examine a large envelope sealed on all sides, I handed it to the Archbishop's Grand Vicar, begging him to keep it in his own possession. Next, handing to the prelate himself a small slip of paper, I requested him to write thereon, secretly, a sentence, or whatever he might choose to think of; the paper was then folded in four, and (apparently) burnt. But scarcely was it consumed and the ashes scattered to the winds, than, handing the envelope to the Archbishop, I requested him to open it. The first envelope being removed a second was found, sealed in like manner; then another, until a dozen envelopes, one inside another, had been opened, the last containing the scrap of paper restored intact. It was passed from hand to hand, and each read as follows:—

"'Though I do not claim to be a prophet, I venture to predict, sir, that you will achieve brilliant success in your future career.'

"I begged Monseigneur Affre's permission to keep the autograph in question, which he very graciously gave me."

Poor Archbishop Affre; he was killed at the barricades in the Revolution of 1848. Though he confessed that he was no prophet, yet his prediction was fulfilled to the letter. Houdin became the foremost conjurer of his age, of any age in fact, and has left to posterity more than a name:—his fascinating memoirs, and several works in which the psychology of deception is treated in a masterly manner. The slip of paper given to him by the Archbishop he preserved as a religious relic. "I kept it," he said, "in a secret corner of my pocket-book which I always carried about my person. During my travels in Algeria I had the misfortune to lose both this pocket-book and the precious object it contained."

After the séance recorded above, the Count de l'Escalopier urged Houdin continually to abandon the watchmaking and mechanical-toy trade and go on the stage as a prestidigitateur. Finally Houdin confessed his inability to do so, owing to lack of means, whereupon the kind-hearted nobleman exclaimed: "*Mon cher ami*, I have at home, at this very moment, ten thousand francs or so, which I really don't know what to do with. Do me the favor to borrow them for an indefinite period: you will be doing me an actual service."

But Houdin would not accept the offer, for he was loth to risk a friend's money in a theatrical speculation. The Count in a state of pique left the shop and did not return for many days. Then he rushed excitedly into the workroom, sank upon a chair, and exclaimed:

"My dear neighbor, since you are determined not to accept a favor from me, I have now come to beg one of you. This is the status of the case. For the last year my desk has been robbed from time to time of very considerable sums of money. In vain have I endeavored to ascertain the thief. I have sent away my servants, one after another. I have had the place watched, changed the locks, and placed secret fastenings on the doors, but none of these safeguards and precautions have foiled the cunning of the miscreant. This very morning a couple of thousand franc-



notes disappeared. Think of the frightful position the entire family is placed in. Can you not come to my assistance?"

"Count," replied Houdin, "I fail to see how I can help you in the present instance. My magic power, unfortunately, extends only to my finger tips."

"That is true," said the Count, "but you have a mighty aid in mechanics."

"Mechanics," exclaimed the magician. "Stop a bit! I remember when I was a boy at school that I invented a primitive piece of apparatus to apprehend a rascal who was in the habit of stealing my boyish possessions. I will improve upon that idea. Come to see me in a few days."

Houdin put on his thinking-cap and shut himself up in his workshop.

From his inner consciousness he evolved a singularly ingenious contrivance, designed not only to discover a thief, but to brand him indelibly for his crime. In brief let me describe it. It was an apparatus to be fastened to the inside of a desk. When the desk was unlocked, and the lid raised ever so little, a pistol was discharged; at the same time a claw-like arrangement, attached to a light rod and impelled by a spring, came sharply down on the back of the hand which held the key. This claw was a tattooing instrument. It consisted of "a number of very short but sharp points, so arranged as to form the word *Robber*. These points were brought through a pad impregnated with nitrate of silver, a portion of which was forced by the blow into the punctures, and made the scars indelible for life."

When the Count saw this apparatus at work, the inventor using a heavily-padded glove to prevent being wounded by the claw, he objected to it strenuously, remarking that he had no right to brand a criminal. That was the province of Justice. He also argued that it would be wrong from a humanitarian standpoint. A poor wretch thus branded could only get rid of it by a horrible self-mutilation. If he failed in his endeavor, it might close the door of repentance forever against him, and class him permanently among the enemies of the social order. "Worse than that," said the Count, "suppose some member of

my family by inadvertence, or through some fatal mistake, should fall a victim to our stern precautions; and then——”

“You are quite right!” said Houdin. “I had not thought of those objections. I was carried away by my enthusiasm as an inventor. You are quite right! I will alter the apparatus at once.”

In the place of the branding contrivance, he inserted a kind of cat’s-claw, which would make a slight scratch on the hand—a mere superficial wound, readily healed. The Count was satisfied with the alteration, and the apparatus was secretly fixed to the desk in the nobleman’s bed-room.

In order to stimulate the cupidity of the robber, the Count drew considerable money from his bankers. He even made a pretence of leaving Paris on a trip to a short distance. But the bait did not take. Sixteen days passed away. The Count had almost despaired of catching the culprit, when one morning while reading in his library, which was some little distance from the bed-room, he heard the report of a pistol.

“Ah,” he exclaimed, excitedly. “The robber at last.” Picking up the first weapon to hand, a battle axe from a stand of ancestral armor near by, he ran quickly to the bed-room. There stood his trusted valet, Bernard, who had been in his household for many years.

“What are you doing here?” asked the Count.

With great coolness and audacity, Bernard explained that he had been brought thither by the noise of the explosion, and had just seen a man making his escape down the back stairs. The Count rushed down the stairs only to find the door locked. A frightful thought overcame him: “Could Bernard be the thief?” He returned to the bed-room. The valet, he noticed, kept his right hand behind him. The Count dragged it forcibly in sight, and saw that it was covered with blood.

“Infamous scoundrel!” said the nobleman, as he flung the man from him in disgust.

“Mercy, mercy!” cried the criminal, falling upon his knees.

"How long have you been robbing me?" asked the Count, sternly.

"For nearly two years."

"And how much have you taken?"

"I cannot tell exactly. Perhaps 15,000 francs, or thereabouts."

"We will call it 15,000 francs. You may keep the rest. What have you done with the money?"

"I have invested it in Government stock. The scrip is in my desk."

The thief yielded up the securities to the amount of fifteen thousand francs, and wrote a confession of his guilt, which he signed in the presence of a witness. The kind-hearted nobleman, bidding the valet repent of his crime, forthwith dismissed him from his employ, agreeing not to prosecute him provided he led an honest life. One year from that date, the wretched Bernard died. Remorse hastened his end.

M. de l'Escalopier took the money thus recovered to Houdin, saying: "I do hope, my dear friend, that you will no longer refuse me the pleasure of lending you this sum, which I owe entirely to your ingenuity and mechanical skill. Take it, return it to me just when you like, with the understanding that it is to be repaid only out of the profits of your theatre."

Overcome by emotion at the generosity of his benefactor, Houdin embraced the Count. "This embrace," he says, "was the only security which M. de l'Escalopier would accept from me."

This was the turning point of the conjurer's life. "It is an ill wind that blows nobody good."

With this money Houdin without further delay built in the Palais Royal a little theatre. "The galleries which surround the garden of the Palais Royal are divided," says Houdin, "into successive arches, occupied by shops. Above these arches there are, on the first floor, spacious suites of apartments, used as public assembly rooms, clubs, cafés, etc. It was in the space occupied by one of these suites, at No. 164 of the Rue de Valois,

that I built my theatre, which extended, in width, over three of the above-mentioned arches; and in length the distance between the garden of the Palais Royal and the Rue de Valois, or, in other words, the whole depth of the building." The dimensions of this miniature theatre were very limited. It would not seat over two hundred people. Though the seats were few in number, their prices were tolerably high. Children were paid for as grown persons.

The Palais Royal was formerly the residence of Cardinal Richelieu, the "Red Duke," and afterwards became the home of the Orléans family. The Regent d'Orléans, in the reign of Louis XV, experimented with magic mirrors in this building. It was in the Palais Royal that the French Revolution was hatched. Could a more favorable place have been selected in which to start a revolution in conjuring? I think not.

The following is the announcement of Houdin's first performance, which appeared on the bill-boards of Paris:

Aujourd'hui Jeudi, 3 Juillet 1845.  
Première Représentation  
des  
Soirées Fantastiques  
de  
Robert-Houdin.

"On this day," says Houdin, "by a strange coincidence, the Hippodrome and the 'Fantastic Soirées' of Robert-Houdin, the largest and smallest stage in Paris, were opened to the public. The 3d of July, 1845, saw two bills placarded on the walls of Paris; one enormous belonging to the Hippodrome, while the other of far more modest proportions, announced my performances. Still as in the fable of the reed and the oak, the large theatre, in spite of the skill of the managers, has undergone many changes of fortune; while the smaller one has continually enjoyed the public favor. I have sacredly kept a proof of my first bill, the form and color of which have always remained the same since that date. I copy it word for word here, both to

furnish an idea of its simplicity, and to display the programme of the experiments I then offered to the public."

To-DAY, THURSDAY, JULY 3, 1845

FIRST REPRESENTATION

OF

**THE FANTASTIC SOIRÉES**

OF

**ROBERT-HOUDIN**

AUTOMATA, SLEIGHT OF HAND, MAGIC

The Performance will be composed of entirely novel Experiments  
invented by M. ROBERT-HOUDIN

AMONG THEM BEING:

<p>THE CABALISTIC CLOCK</p> <p>AURIOL AND DEBUREAU</p> <p>THE ORANGE-TREE</p> <p>THE MYSTERIOUS BOUQUET</p> <p>THE HANDKERCHIEF</p> <p>PIERROT IN THE EGG</p>	<p>OBEDIENT CARDS</p> <p>THE MIRACULOUS FISH</p> <p>THE FASCINATING OWL</p> <p>THE PASTRYCOOK OF THE PALAIS ROYAL</p>
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TO COMMENCE AT EIGHT O'CLOCK

Box-office open at Half-past Seven

Price of places: Upper Boxes, 1 fr. 50 c.; Stalls, 3 fr.; Boxes,  
4 fr.; Dress Circle, 5 fr.

These fantastic evenings soon became popular. When the Revolution of 1848 ruined the majority of Parisian theater managers, Houdin simply locked the door of his hall, and retired to his little workshop to invent new tricks and automata. His loss was very slight, for he was under no great expense. When order was restored, he resumed the *soirées magiques*. The newspapers rallied to his assistance and made playful allusions to his

being related to the family of *Robert le Diable*. The leading illustrated journals sent artists to draw pictures of his stage. Houdin found time, amid all his labors, to edit a little paper which he called *Cagliostro*, full of *bon mots* and pleasantries, to say nothing of cartoons. Copies of this *petit journal pour rire* were distributed among the spectators at each performance.

As each theatrical season opened, Houdin had some new marvel to present to his audiences. His maxims were: "It is more difficult to support admiration than to excite it." "The fashion an artist enjoys can only last as long as his talent daily increases." Houdin had but few, if any, rivals in his day. His tricks were all new, or so improved as to appear new. He swept everything before him. When he went to London for a prolonged engagement, Anderson, the "Wizard of the North," who was a great favorite with the public, retired into the Provinces with his antique repertoire. What had the English conjurer to offer alongside of such unique novelties as the *Second Sight*, *Aerial Suspension*, *Inexhaustible Bottle*, *Mysterious Portfolio*, *Crystal Cash Box*, *Shower of Gold*, *Light and Heavy Chest*, *Orange Tree*, the *Crystal Clock*, and the automaton figures *Auriol* and *Debureau*, the *Pastry Cook of the Palais Royal*, etc., etc.

### III.

Jean-Eugène Robert (Houdin) was born on December 6, 1805, in the quaint old city of Blois, the birth-place of Louis XII. and of Papin, the inventor of the steam engine. Napoleon was at the zenith of his fame, and had just fought the bloody battle of Austerlitz.

Luckily for the subject of this sketch, he was born too late to serve as food for powder. He lived to grow to man's estate and honorable old age, and became the veritable Napoleon of necromancy. His career makes fascinating reading. Houdin's father was a watchmaker, and from him he inherited his remarkable mechanical genius. At the age of eleven, Jean-Eugène was sent to college at Orleans. On the completion of his studies, he entered a notary's office at Blois, but spent most of his time inventing little mechanical toys and devices, instead of engrossing

dusty parchment, so the notary advised him to abandon the idea of becoming a lawyer and take up a mechanical trade. Houdin joyfully took up his father's occupation of watchmaking, for which he had a decided bent. One evening the young apprentice went to a bookseller's shop in Blois and asked for a work on horology by Berthoud. The shopman by mistake handed him a couple of odd volumes of the *Encyclopédie*, which somewhat resembled Berthoud's book. Jean-Eugène went home to his attic, lit a candle, and prepared to devote an evening to hard study, but judge of his surprise to find that the supposed treatise on watchmaking was a work on natural magic and prestidigitation, under the head of scientific amusements. He was delighted at the revelations contained in the mystic volume, which told how to perform tricks with the cards, to cut off a pigeon's head and restore it again, etc., etc. Here was an introduction to the New Arabian Nights of enchantment. He slept with the book under his pillow, and possibly dreamed of African wizards, genii, and all sorts of incantations. This little incident brought about great changes in Houdin's life. He secretly vowed to become a prestidigitateur,—a rôle for which he was eminently fitted, psychologically and physically. The principles of sleight of hand Houdin had to create for himself, for the mystic volume, though it revealed the secrets of the tricks, gave the neophyte no adequate idea of the subtle passes and misdirection required to properly execute them.

Though an ardent devotee of legerdemain, Houdin did not neglect his trade of watchmaker. When his apprenticeship was over, he went to Tours as a journeyman, in the shop of M. Noriet, who afterwards became a noted sculptor. While in the employ of M. Noriet, Houdin was poisoned by eating a ragout cooked in a stew pan in which there chanced to be verdigris. He was very ill, and his life was saved with difficulty. Possessed with the idea that he was soon to die, he escaped one day from his nurse and doctor and set out for Blois to bid adieu to his family before he departed from this sublunary sphere. A most singular adventure befell him, which reads like a romance. Those who believe in destiny have here a curious example of its

strange workings. The jolting of the lumbering old diligence gave Houdin great pain. He was burning with fever and delirious. Without any one knowing it, he opened the door of the *rotonde*, in which he happened to be the only passenger, and leaped out on the high road, where he lay unconscious. When he recovered his senses, he found himself lying in a comfortable bed. An unknown man with a phial of medicine in his hand bent over him. By the strangest luck, Houdin had fallen into the hands of a traveling conjurer named Torrini, who went about the country in a sort of house on wheels, which was drawn by a pair of big Norman horses. This unique vehicle which was six yards in length could be converted into a miniature theatre twice its size by an ingenious mechanical arrangement. The body was telescopic and could be drawn out, the projection being supported by trestles. Torrini early in life had been a physician and was able to tend his patient with intelligence and skill. Finding the young watchmaker a clever mechanic, Torrini gave him some magical automata to repair, and Houdin was introduced for the first time to the little Harlequin that jumps out of a box and performs various feats at the mandate of the conjurer. A delightful friendship began between the watchmaker and the wizard. Torrini, who was an expert with cards, initiated Houdin into the secrets of many clever tricks performed with the pasteboards. He also corrected his pupil's numerous mistakes in legerdemain, into which all self-educated amateurs fall. It was a fascinating life led in this conjurer's caravan. Besides Torrini and Houdin there was Antonio, the assistant, and man of all work. Torrini related many amusing adventures to his young pupil, which the latter has recorded in his admirable autobiography. It was he, the *ci-devant*, Comte de Grisy who performed the famous watch trick before Pius VII. and had so unique revenge upon the Chevalier Pinetti.

Torrini's son was accidentally shot by a spectator in the gun trick during a performance at Strasburg, as has been explained in the chapter on the "History of Natural Magic and Prestidigitation." Overcome with grief at the loss of his only child and at the subsequent death of his wife, he abandoned the great cities



and wandered about the French Provinces attended by his faithful assistant and brother-in-law, Antonio. But to return to Robert-Houdin.

One day at Aubusson the conjurer's caravan collided with an enormous hay cart. Houdin and Antonio escaped with light contusions, but the Master had a leg broken and an arm dislocated. The two horses were killed; as for the carriage, only the body remained intact; all the rest was smashed to atoms. During Torrini's illness, Houdin, assisted by Antonio, gave a conjuring performance at the town hall to replete the exchequer. Houdin succeeded very well in his first attempt, with the exception that he ruined a gentleman's chapeau while performing the trick of the omelet in the hat.

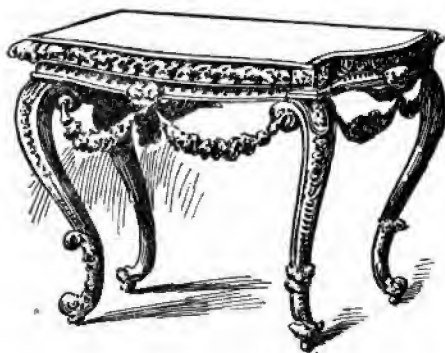
Soon after this Houdin bid adieu to Torrini and returned to his parents at Blois. He never saw Torrini again in this life. After following watchmaking at Blois for quite a little while, he proceeded to Paris, with his wife,—for he had not only taken unto himself a spouse, but had adopted her name, Houdin, as part of his own cognomen. He was now Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin, master-watchmaker. His recontre with the Count de l'Escalopier and the result have already been given.

Houdin completely revolutionized the art of conjuring. Prior to his time, the tables used by magicians were little else than huge confederate boxes. Conjuring under such circumstances was child's play, as compared with the difficulties to be encountered with the apparatus of the new school. In addition, Houdin discarded the long, flowing robes of many of his predecessors, and appeared in evening dress. Since his time all first-class prestidigitateurs have followed his example, both as to dress and tables.

Houdin's center-table was a marvel of mechanical skill and ingenuity. Concealed in the body were "vertical rods, each arranged to rise and fall in a tube, according as it was drawn down by a spiral spring or pulled up by a whip-cord which passed over a pulley at the top of the tube and so down the table-leg to the hiding-place of the confederate." There were "ten of these pistons, and ten cords passing under the floor of the stage, terminat-

ing at a key-board. Various ingenious automata were actuated by this means of transmitting motion."

Houdin's stage was very handsome. It was a replica in miniature of a salon of the Louis XV. period—all in white and gold—illuminated by elegant candelabra and a chandelier. The magic table occupied the center of the room. This piece of furniture was flanked by little guéridons. At the sides were consoles, with about five inches of gold fringe hanging from them, and across the back of the apartment ran a broad shelf, upon which was displayed the various apparatus to be used in the séances. "The consoles were nothing more than shallow wooden



HOUDIN'S TRICK-TABLE.

boxes with openings through the side-scenes. The tops of the consoles were perforated with traps. Any object which the wizard desired to work off secretly to his confederate behind the scenes was placed on one of these traps and covered with a sheet of paper, pasteboard cover or a handkerchief. Touching a spring caused the article to fall noiselessly through the trap upon cotton batting, and roll into the hand of the conjurer's concealed assistant."

Now for a few of the tricks of this classic prestidigitateur. His greatest invention was the "light and heavy chest." Speaking of this remarkable experiment he wrote: "I do not think, modesty apart, that I ever invented anything so daringly ingenious." The magician came forward with a little wooden box,

to the top of which was attached a metal handle. He addressed the audience as follows: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have a cash-box which possesses strange properties. It becomes heavy or light at will. I place in it some banknotes for safekeeping and deposit it here on the 'run-down' in sight of all. Will some gentleman test the lightness of the box?"

When the volunteer had satisfied the audience that the box could be lifted with the little finger, Houdin executed some pretended mesmeric passes over it, and bade the gentleman lift it a second time. But try as he might, the volunteer would prove unequal to the task. At a sign from Houdin the box would be restored to its pristine lightness. This trick was performed with a powerful electro-magnet with conducting wires reaching behind the scenes to a battery. At a signal from the performer an operator turned on the electric current, and the box, which had an iron plate let into its bottom, covered with mahogany-colored paper, clung to the magnet with supernatural attraction. In the year 1845, the phenomena of electro-magnetism were unknown to the general public, hence the spirit cash-box created the most extraordinary sensation. When the subject of electricity became better known, Houdin made an addition to the feat which threw his spectators off the scent. After first having shown the trick on the "run-down," he hooked the box to one end of a cord which passed over a pulley attached to the ceiling of the hall. A spectator was requested to take hold of the other end of the cord and keep the chest suspended.

"Just at present," remarked the conjurer, "the chest is extremely light; but as it is about to become, at my command, very heavy, I must ask five or six other persons to help this gentleman, for fear the chest should lift him off his feet."

No sooner was this done than the chest came heavily to the ground, dragging along and sometimes lifting off their feet all the spectators who were holding the cord. The explanation is this: On a casual inspection of the pulley and block everything appears to indicate that, as usual in such cases, the cord passes straight over the pulley, in on one side and out on the other; but such is not really the fact, as will be seen upon tracing the course

of the dotted lines (Fig. 1), which, passing through the block and through the ceiling, are attached on either side to a double pulley fixed in the room above. To any one who has the most elementary acquaintance with the laws of mechanics, it will be obvious that the strength of the person who holds the handle of the windlass above is multiplied tenfold, and that he can easily overcome even the combined resistance of five or six spectators."

The "Bust of Socrates" was another favorite experiment with Houdin. In this illusion a living bust with the features of Socrates was suspended in the middle of the stage without visible

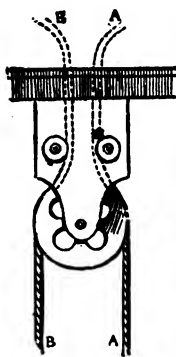


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2. THE TALKING BUST.

support. The performer, habited as an Athenian noble, addressed questions to the mutilated philosopher and received replies in stanzas of elegiac verse. The *mise en scène* is represented in Fig. 2. Houdin explains the illusion as follows:

"A, B, C, D, (Fig. 3) represent a section of the stage on which the trick is exhibited. A sheet of silvered glass, G, G, occupying the whole width of the stage, is placed in a diagonal position, extending from the upper part of the stage at the rear, down to the footlights, so as to form an angle of forty-five degrees with the floor. In the center of the glass is an opening through which

the actor passes his head and shoulders, as shown in the figure. It should be further mentioned that the ceiling and the two sides of the stage are hung with wall-paper of the same pattern, and are brilliantly illuminated, either by means of footlights at *C*, or by gas-jets placed behind the border *A*. Such being the condition of things, the effect is as follows: The ceiling *A* is reflected in the mirror, and its reflection appears to the spectators to be the paper of the wall *B, D*, which in reality is hidden by the glass.

"By means of this reflection, of which he is of course unaware, the spectator is led to believe that he sees three sides of

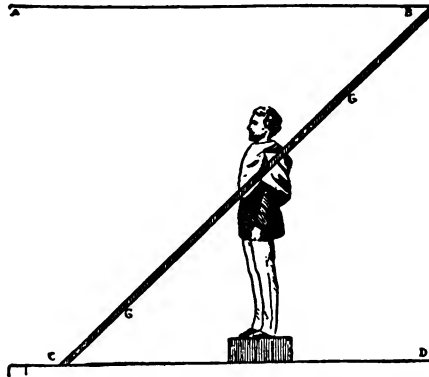


Fig 3. HOW THE TALKING BUST WAS WORKED.

the stage; and there being nothing to suggest to his mind the presence of the glass, he is led to believe that the bust is suspended in mid-air and without any support."

"Aerial Suspension" was one of Houdin's inventions. It has been a favorite trick since his time. In the original illusion Houdin had one of his young sons, who was dressed as a page, stand on a small stool. The performer then placed a walking-stick under the extended right arm of the boy, near the elbow, and one under the left arm. First the stool was knocked away and the youthful assistant was suspended in the air, held up only by the two frail sticks, which were in themselves inadequate to support such a weight. Then the left stick was removed, but the boy did not fall. To the astonishment of every one, the youth

was placed in a horizontal position. He remained in a perfectly rigid attitude with his head leaning on his arm, the top of the cane under his elbow.

This very ingenious trick was suggested to Houdin on reading stories about the alleged levitation of Hindoo fakirs. The walking-stick that supported the right arm of the assistant was of iron, painted to resemble wood. It fitted into a slot in the stage; its top connected with a bar concealed in the sleeve of the boy. This bar formed part of a strong steel framework worn under the assistant's clothing. Thus was the page suspended in the air.

Houdin's trick of the "orange-tree" was a capital one. The tree blossomed and bore fruit at the command of the conjurer. All the oranges were distributed among the spectators except one on the topmost branch of the tree. In this orange the magician caused a handkerchief to appear, which had been previously borrowed. The handkerchief was made to vanish from the hands of the performer. "Hey, presto!" the orange fell apart in four sections, whereupon two butterflies sprang out and fluttered upward with the handkerchief. The explanation of this beautiful trick is as follows: The tree was a clever piece of mechanism, so closely fashioned to resemble a plant that it was impossible to detect the difference. The blossoms, constructed of white silk, were pushed up through the hollow branches by pistons rising in the table and operating upon similar rods contained in the tree. When these pedals were relaxed the blossoms disappeared, and the fruit was slowly developed. Real oranges were stuck on iron spikes protruding from the branches of the tree, and were concealed from the spectators by hemispherical wire screens painted green. The screens were also partly hidden by the artificial foliage. By means of cords running down through the branches of the tree and off behind the scenes, an assistant caused the screens to make a half-turn, thereby developing the fruit. The borrowed handkerchief was exchanged for a dummy belonging to the conjurer, and passed to an assistant who placed it in the mechanical orange. The tree was now brought forward. After the real fruit had been distributed, the magician called attention to the orange on the top (the mechanical one). By

means of sleight of hand the handkerchief was made to vanish, to be discovered in the orange. The butterflies, which were fastened by wires to the stalk and fixed on delicate spiral springs, invisible at a little distance, flew out of the orange of their own accord, carrying with them the handkerchief, as soon as the fruit fell apart.

#### IV.

In the year 1846 Houdin was summoned to the Palace of Saint-Cloud to give a performance before Louis Philippe and his Court, whereupon he invented his remarkable trick of the enchanted casket, which created great excitement in the Parisian journals, and gained him no little fame. He had six days to prepare for the *séance magique*. Early on the appointed morning a van from the royal stables came to convey him and his son, together with the magic paraphernalia, to the palace of the king. A stage had been erected in one of the handsome salons of St. Cloud, the windows of which opened out on an orangery lined with double rows of orange-trees, "each growing in its square box on wheels. A sentry was placed at the door to see that the conjurer was not disturbed in his preparations. The King himself dropped in once to ask the entertainer if he had everything necessary."

At four o'clock in the afternoon, a brilliant company assembled in the hall to witness the performance. The *pièce de résistance* of the séance was Cagliostro's casket, the effect of which is best described in Houdin's own words:

"I borrowed from my noble spectators several handkerchiefs, which I made into a parcel, and laid on the table. Then, at my request, different persons wrote on blank cards the names of places whither they desired their handkerchiefs to be invisibly transported.

"When this had been done, I begged the King to take three of the cards at hazard, and choose from them the place he might consider most suitable.

"Let us see," Louis Philippe said, 'what this one says: "I desire the handkerchiefs to be found beneath one of the can-

delabra on the mantelpiece." That is too easy for a sorcerer; so we will pass to the next card: "The handkerchiefs are to be transported to the dome of the Invalides." That would suit me, but it is much too far, not for the handkerchiefs, but for us, 'Ah, ah!' the King added, looking at the last card, 'I am afraid, Monsieur Robert-Houdin, I am about to embarrass you. Do you know what this card proposes?'

" 'Will your majesty deign to inform me?'

" 'It is desired that you should send the handkerchiefs into the chest of the last orange-tree on the right of the avenue.'

" 'Only that, sir? Deign to order, and I will obey.'

" 'Very good, then; I should like to see such a magic act: I, therefore, choose the orange-tree chest.'

"The king gave some orders in a low voice, and I directly saw several persons run to the orange-tree, in order to watch it and prevent any fraud.

"I was delighted at this precaution, which must add to the effect of my experiment, for the trick was already arranged, and the precaution hence too late.

"I had now to send the handkerchiefs on their travels, so I placed them beneath a bell of opaque glass, and, taking my wand, I ordered my invisible travelers to proceed to the spot the king had chosen.

"I raised the bell; the little parcel was no longer there, and a white turtle-dove had taken its place.

"The King then walked quickly to the door, whence he looked in the direction of the orange-tree, to assure himself that the guards were at their post; when this was done, he began to smile and shrug his shoulders.

" 'Ah! Monsieur Houdin,' he said, somewhat ironically, 'I much fear for the virtue of your magic staff.' Then he added, as he returned to the end of the room, where several servants were standing, 'Tell William to open immediately the last chest at the end of the avenue, and bring me carefully what he finds there—if he *does* find anything.'

"William soon proceeded to the orange-tree, and though much astonished at the orders given him, he began to carry them out.



"He carefully removed one of the sides of the chest, thrust his hand in, and almost touched the roots of the tree before he found anything. All at once he uttered a cry of surprise, as he drew out a small iron coffer eaten by rust.

"This curious 'find,' after having been cleansed of the mould, was brought in and placed on a small ottoman by the king's side.

"'Well, Monsieur Robert-Houdin,' Louis Philippe said to me, with a movement of impatient curiosity, 'here is a box; am I to conclude it contains the handkerchiefs?'

"'Yes, sire,' I replied, with assurance, 'and they have been there, too, for a long period.'

"'How can that be? the handkerchiefs were lent you scarce a quarter of an hour ago.'

"'I cannot deny it, sire; but what would my magic powers avail me if I could not perform incomprehensible tricks? Your Majesty will doubtless be still more surprised, when I prove to your satisfaction that this coffer, as well as its contents, was deposited in the chest of the orange-tree sixty years ago.'

"'I should like to believe your statement,' the King replied, with a smile; 'but that is impossible, and I must, therefore, ask for proofs of your assertion.'

"'If Your Majesty will be kind enough to open this casket they will be supplied.'

"'Certainly; but I shall require a key for that.'

"'It only depends on yourself, sire, to have one. Deign to remove it from the neck of this turtle-dove, which has just brought it to you.'

"Louis Philippe unfastened a ribbon that held a small rusty key, with which he hastened to unlock the coffer.

"The first thing that caught the King's eye was a parchment on which he read the following statement:

"'This day, the 6th June, 1786.

This iron box, containing six handkerchiefs, was placed among the roots of an orange-tree by me, Balsamo, Count of Cagliostro, to serve in performing an act of magic, which will be executed on the same day sixty years hence before Louis Philippe of Orleans and his family.'

“‘There is decidedly witchcraft about this,’ the king said, more and more amazed. ‘Nothing is wanting, for the seal and signature of the celebrated sorcerer are placed at the foot of this statement, which, Heaven pardon me, smells strongly of sulphur.’

“At this jest the audience began to laugh.

“‘But,’ the king added, taking out of the box a carefully sealed packet, ‘can the handkerchiefs by possibility be in this?’

“‘Indeed, sire, they are; but, before opening the parcel, I would request your majesty to notice that it also bears the impression of Cagliostro’s seal.

“This seal once rendered so famous by being placed on the celebrated alchemist’s bottles of elixir and liquid gold, I had obtained from Torrini, who had been an old friend of Cagliostro’s.

“‘It is certainly the same,’ my royal spectator answered, after comparing the two seals. Still, in his impatience to learn the contents of the parcel, the king quickly tore open the envelope and soon displayed before the astonished spectators the six handkerchiefs which, a few moments before, were still on my table.

“This trick gained me lively applause.”

Robert-Houdin never revealed the secret of this remarkable experiment in natural magic, but the acute reader, especially if he be a student of legerdemain, will be able to give a pretty shrewd guess as to the *modus operandi*. The best analysis of this trick has been lately given by Professor Brander Matthews. He writes as follows (*Scribner’s Magazine*, May, 1903):

“Nothing more extraordinary was ever performed by any mere conjurer; indeed, this feat is quite as startling as any of those attributed to Cagliostro himself, and it has the advantage of being accurately and precisely narrated by the inventor. Not only is the thing done a seeming impossibility, but it stands forth the more impressively because of the spectacular circumstances of its performance,—a stately palace, a lovely garden, the assembled courtiers, and the royal family. The magician had to depend on his wits alone, for he was deprived of all advantages of his own theatre and of all possibility of aid from a confederate mingled amid the casual spectators.

"Robert-Houdin was justified in the gentle pride with which he told how he had thus astonished the King of the French. He refrained from any explanation of the means whereby he wrought his mystery, believing that what is unknown is ever the more magnificent. He did no more than drop a hint or two, telling the reader that he had long possessed a cast of Cagliostro's seal, and suggesting slyly that when the King sent messengers out into the garden to stand guard over the orange-tree the trick was already done and all precautions were then futile.

"Yet, although the inventor chose to keep his secret, any one who has mastered the principles of the art of magic can venture an explanation. Robert-Houdin has set forth the facts honestly; and with the facts solidly established, it is possible to reason out the method employed to accomplish a deed which, at first sight, seems not only impossible but incomprehensible.

"The first point to be emphasized is that Robert-Houdin was as dexterous as he was ingenious. He was truly a prestidigitateur, capable of any sleight of hand. Nothing was simpler for so accomplished a performer than the substitution of one package for another, right before the eyes of all the spectators. And it is to be remembered that although the palace was the King's the apparatus on the extemporized stage was the magician's. Therefore, when he borrowed six handkerchiefs and went up on the stage and made them up into a package which remained on a table in sight of everybody, we can grant without difficulty that the package which remained in sight did not then contain the borrowed handkerchiefs.

"In fact, we may be sure that the borrowed handkerchiefs had been conveyed somehow to Robert-Houdin's son who acted as his assistant. When the handkerchiefs were once in the possession of the son out of sight behind the scenery or hangings of the stage, the father would pick up his package of blank visiting-cards and distribute a dozen of them or a score, moving to and fro in very leisurely fashion, perhaps going back to the stage to get pencils which he would also give out as slowly as possible, filling up the time with playful pleasantry, until he should again

catch sight of his son. Then, and not until then, would he feel at liberty to collect the cards and take them over to the King. When the son had got possession of the handkerchiefs, he would smooth them swiftly, possibly even ironing them into their folds. Then he would put them into the parchment packet which he would seal twice with Cagliostro's seal. Laying this packet in the bottom of the rusty iron casket, he would put on top the other parchment which had already been prepared, with its adroit imitation of Cagliostro's handwriting. Snapping down the lid of the casket, the lad would slip out into the corridor and steal into the garden, going straight to the box of the appointed orange-tree. He could do this unobserved, because no one was then suspecting him and because all the spectators were then engaged in thinking up odd places to which the handkerchiefs might be transported. Already, in the long morning, probably while the royal household was at its midday breakfast, the father or the son had loosened one of the staples in the back of the box in which the designated orange-tree was growing. The lad now removed this staple and thrust the casket into the already prepared hole in the center of the roots of the tree. Then he replaced the staple at the back of the box, feeling certain that whoever should open the box in front would find the soil undisturbed. This most difficult part of the task once accomplished, he returned to the stage, or at least in some way he signified to his father that he had accomplished his share of the wonder, in the performance of which he was not supposed to have any part.

"On seeing his son, or on receiving the signal that his son had returned, Robert-Houdin would feel himself at liberty to collect the cards on which various spectators had written the destinations they proposed for the package of handkerchiefs which was still in full sight. He gathered up the cards he had distributed; but as he went toward the King, he substituted for those written by the spectators others previously prepared by himself,—a feat of sleight of hand quite within the reach of any ordinary performer. Of these cards, prepared by himself, he forced three

on the sovereign; and the forcing of cards upon a kindly monarch would present little difficulty to a prestidigitateur of Robert-Houdin's consummate skill.

"When the three cards were once in the King's hands, the trick was done, for Robert-Houdin knew Louis Philippe to be a shrewd man in small matters. Therefore, it was reasonably certain that when the King had to make a choice out of three places, one near and easy, a second remote and difficult, and a third both near and difficult, Louis Philippe would surely select the third which was conveniently at hand and which seemed to be at least as impossible as either of the others.

"The event proved that the conjurer's analysis of the King's character was accurate: yet one may venture the opinion that the magician had taken every needed precaution to avoid failure even if the monarch had made another selection. Probably Robert-Houdin had one little parchment packet hidden in advance somewhere in the dome of the Invalides and another tucked up out of sight in the base of one of the candelabra on the chimney-piece; and if either of the other destinations had been chosen, the substitute packet would have been produced and the magician would then have offered to transport it also into the box of the orange-tree. And thus the startling climax of the marvel would have been only a little delayed.

"When so strange a wonder can be wrought under such circumstances by means so simple, we cannot but feel the force of Dr. Lodge's warning that an unwavering scepticism ought to be the attitude of all honest investigators toward every one who professes to be able to suspend the operation of a custom of nature. No one of the feats attributed to Home, the celebrated medium who plied his trade in Paris during the Second Empire, was more abnormal than this trick of Cagliostro's Casket, and no one of them is so well authenticated. It may be that certain of the customs of nature are not inexorable and that we shall be able to discover exceptions now and again. But the proof of any alleged exception, the evidence in favor of any alleged violation of the custom of nature, ought to be overwhelming."

## V.

The greatest event of Houdin's life was his embassy to Algeria, "at the special request of the French Government, which desired to lessen the influence of the Marabouts, whose conjuring tricks, accepted as actual magic by the Arabs, gave them too much influence." He went to play off his tricks against those of Arab priests, or holy men, and, by "greater marvels than they could show, destroy the *prestige* which they had acquired. He so completely succeeded that the Arabs lost all faith in the miracles of the Marabouts, and thus was destroyed an influence very dangerous to the French Government." His first performance was given at the leading theatre of Algiers, before a great assemblage of Arabs, who had been summoned to witness the *soirée magique*, by the mandate of the Marshall-Governor of Algeria. Houdin's "Light and Heavy Chest" literally paralyzed the Arabs with astonishment. He altered the *mise en scène*, and pretended to be able to make the strongest man so weak that he would be unable to lift a small box from the floor. He says in his memoirs:

"I advanced with my box in my hand, to the center of the 'practicable,' communicating from the stage to the pit; then addressing the Arabs, I said to them:

"'From what you have witnessed, you will attribute a supernatural power to me, and you are right. I will give you a new proof of my marvelous authority, by showing that I can deprive the most powerful man of his strength and restore it at my will. Any one who thinks himself strong enough to try the experiment may draw near me.' (I spoke slowly, in order to give the interpreter time to translate my words)."

"An Arab of middle height, but well built and muscular, like many of the Arabs are, came to my side with sufficient assurance.

"'Are you very strong?' I said to him, measuring him from head to foot.

"'Oh yes!' he replied carelessly.

"'Are you sure you will always remain so?'

"'Quite sure.'

"'You are mistaken, for in an instant I will rob you of your strength, and you shall become like as a little child.'

"The Arab smiled disdainfully, as a sign of his incredulity.

" 'Stay,' I continued; 'lift up this box.'

"The Arab stooped, lifted up the box, and said to me, 'Is this all?'

" 'Wait ——!' I replied.

"Then with all possible gravity, I made an imposing gesture and solemnly pronounced the words:

" 'Behold! you are weaker than a woman; now, try to lift the box.'

"The Hercules, quite cool as to my conjuration, seized the box once again by the handle, and gave it a violent tug, but this time the box resisted, and spite of his most vigorous attacks, would not budge an inch.

"The Arab vainly expended on this unlucky box a strength which would have raised an enormous weight, until at length exhausted, panting, and red with anger, he stopped, became thoughtful, and began to comprehend the influences of magic.

"He was on the point of withdrawing; but that would be allowing his weakness, and that he, hitherto respected for his vigor, had become as a little child. This thought rendered him almost mad.

"Deriving fresh strength from the encouragements his friends offered him by word and deed, he turned a glance around them, which seemed to say, 'You will see what a son of the desert can do.'

"He bent once again over the box: his nervous hands twined around the handle, and his legs, placed on either side like two bronze columns, served as a support for the final effort.

"But, wonder of wonders! this Hercules, a moment since so strong and proud, now bows his head; his arms, riveted to the box, undergo a violent muscular contraction; his legs give way, and he falls on his knees with a yell of agony.

"An electric shock, produced by an induction apparatus, had been passed, on a signal from me, from the further end of the stage into the handle of the box. Hence the contortions of the poor Arab!

"It would have been cruelty to prolong this scene.

"I gave a second signal, and the electric current was immediately intercepted. My athlete, disengaged from his terrible bondage, raised his hands over his head.

"*'Allah! Allah'* he exclaimed, full of terror; then, wrapping himself up quickly in the folds of his burnous, as if to hide his disgrace, he rushed through the ranks of the spectators and gained the front entrance.

"With the exception of the dignitaries occupying the stage boxes and the privileged spectators, in the body of the house, who seemed to take great pleasure in this great experiment, my audience had become grave and silent, and I heard the words *'Shaitan!'* *'Djenoum!'* passing in a murmur round the circle of credulous men, who, while gazing on me, seemed astonished that I possessed none of the physical qualities attributed to the angel of darkness."

The Marabout priests constantly boasted of their invulnerability. They were reputed to be possessed of powerful talismans which caused loaded weapons to flash in the pan when fired at them. Houdin counteracted these claims by performing his celebrated bullet-catching feat, in which a marked bullet apparently shot from a gun is caught by the magician in a plate or between his teeth. There are two ways of accomplishing this trick. One is by substituting a bullet of hollow wax for the real leaden bullet. The explosion scatters the wax into minute fragments which fly in all directions and do not come in contact with the person shot at; provided he stands at a respectable distance from the individual who handles the pistol or gun. The second method is to insert into the barrel of the weapon a small tube open at one end. Into this receptacle the bullet falls, and the tube is withdrawn from the gun in the act of ramming it, forming as it were a part of the ramrod. The performer, once in possession of the little tube, secretly extracts the marked bullet and produces it at the proper time. Houdin had recourse to both ways of performing this startling trick. Sometimes he filled the wax bullet with blood, extracted from his thumb. When the bullet smashed against a white wall it left a red splash. Houdin, after traveling into the interior of Algeria, visiting many prominent chieftains, returned to France, and settled down at St. Gervais, a suburb



of Blois. He relinquished his theatre to his brother-in-law, Pierre Chocat (M. Hamilton), and devoted himself to scientific work, and writing his *Confidences* and other works on natural magic.

## VI.

Houdin called his villa at St. Gervais the "Priory," a rather monastic title. It was a veritable palace of enchantments. Electrical devices played an important part in its construction, as well as automata. The Pepper ghost illusion was rigged up in a small pavilion on the grounds. A mechanical hermit welcomed guests to a grotto: Houdin's friends jestingly called the place "*L'Abbaye de l'Attrape (la Trappe)*," or "Catch'em Abbey." The pun is almost untranslatable. "*Attrape*" is a trap, in French. You have a Trappist Monastery. I need say no more. During the Franco-Prussian War, Houdin's neighbors brought their valuables to him to be concealed. He had a hiding place built which defied detection. But the Prussians never bothered him.

Says William Manning (*Recollections of Robert-Houdin*, London, 1891):

"Robert-Houdin's employment of electricity, not only as a moving power for the performance of his illusions, but for domestic purposes, was long in advance of his time. The electric bell, so common to us now, was in every-day use *for years* in his own house, before its value was recognized by the public.

"He had a favorite horse, named Fanny, for which he entertained great affection, and christened her 'the friend of the family.' She was of gentle disposition and was growing old in his service; so he was anxious to allow her every indulgence, especially punctuality at meals and full allowance of fodder.

"Such being the case, it was a matter of great surprise that Fanny grew daily thinner and thinner, till it was discovered that her groom had a great fancy for the art formerly practised by her master and converted her hay into five-franc pieces! So Houdin dismissed the groom and secured a more honest lad, but to provide against further contingencies and neglect of duty he had

a clock placed in his study, which with the aid of an electrical wire worked a food supply in the stable, a distance of fifty yards from the house. The distributing apparatus was a square funnel-shaped box which discharged the provender in prearranged quantities. No one could steal the oats from the horse after they had fallen, as the electric trigger could not act unless the stable door was locked. The lock was outside, and if any one entered before the horse finished eating his oats, a bell would immediately ring in the house.

"This same clock in his study also transmitted the time to two large clock-faces, placed one on the top of the house, the other on the gardener's lodge, the former for the benefit of the villagers.

"In his bell-tower he had a clockwork arrangement of sufficient power to lift the hammer at the proper moment. The daily winding of the clock was performed automatically by communication with a swing-door in his kitchen, and the winding-up apparatus of the clock in the clock-tower was so arranged that the servants in passing backward and forward on their domestic duties unconsciously wound up the striking movement of the clock."

The Priory is now a partial ruin. It has passed out of his family. Houdin died there June 13, 1871, after an illness of ten days. His death was caused by pneumonia. The following is an extract of the notice of his decease, taken from the registers of the civil authorities of St. Gervais:

"June 14, 1871. Notice of the death of Robert-Houdin, Jean-Eugène, died at St. Gervais, June 13, 1871, at 10 P. M., sixty-five years of age. Son of the defunct Prosper Robert and Marie Catherine Guillon; widower of his first wife Josephe Cecile Eglantine Houdin; married the second time to Françoise Marguerite Olympe Naconnier; Court House of St. Gervais, signed—The Mayor." The signature is illegible.

William Manning was an intimate friend of Houdin. When the famous conjurer went to London to exhibit, he lodged at the house of Manning's father. William was a young man at the time and deeply enamored with conjuring exhibitions. Hou-

din showed him many favors and presented him with a number of souvenirs, among them being a magic clock, a harlequin-in-the-box, etc., also a photograph of himself, a copy of which Mr. Manning sent to me a few years ago, during the course of a correspondence I had with him concerning Houdin. Up to the time of his death the great conjurer exchanged letters with his friend, then a grown man. Houdin's closing years were saddened by the tragic death of his son, Eugène, who was killed at Reichshoffen in the Franco-Prussian War. He was a sub-lieutenant in the French army and a graduate of the military school at St. Cyr. He assisted his father on the stage, but abandoned conjuring for a military career. In a letter to William Manning, dated September 11, 1870, Houdin describes the affair at Reichshoffen: . . . . "My son was 33 years old; he was captain since 1866; he belonged to the 1st Zouaves and was considered one of the bravest in that brave corps. You can judge of it by the following extract from an article in the *Figaro*, of Sept. 3, entitled 'An episode of Reichshoffen,' an extract from a private letter. This letter was undoubtedly written by a soldier in my son's company; it is signed with an X. I omit the harrowing incidents which preceded this sad retreat. . . . . 'The line had received orders to break up and were defeated, 35,000 against 140,000! My company (1st Zouaves) was drawn up on the battle-field, to be used as sharp-shooters, alone, without artillery; we were to resist the retreat. Upon the order of Captain Robert-Houdin, Lieutenant Girard advanced with two men to reconnoitre the enemy. He took three steps, and fell, crying: '*Do not give up the Coucou*, (a familiar expression applied to the flag). We carried him away and the Captain shouted 'Fire!' The order to retreat came, but we did not hear it, and continued to beat against a wall of fire which illuminated our ranks. Soon our Captain fell, saying: 'Tell them . . . . that I fell facing the enemy.' A bullet had pierced his breast. He was taken in the ambulance to Reichshoffen where he died, four days later, from his wound."

"My dear Manning, would you believe it, my brave son, mortally wounded as he was, had the heroic courage amidst

flying shot to take from his pocket a pencil and a card and to write these words: 'Dear father, *I am wounded, but be reassured, it is only a trifle.*' He could not sign this. The card and the envelope are stained with his blood. This précieux relic was sent to me from Reichshoffen after my son's death."



LITHOGRAPHED INVITATION-TICKET DESIGNED BY HOUDIN.

(The signatures are those of Houdin and Hamilton.)

Emile, the elder son who distinguished himself in the "Second-Sight Trick," as soon as his father retired from the stage, became a watchmaker. He published a work on horology to which his father wrote the following preface:

"I have often been asked why my son did not follow the career I had opened for him in prestidigitation, but preferred instead the study of horology. My answer to the question may be used fitly as a preface to this pamphlet.

"If you believe in hereditary vocations, here is a case for their just application. My son's maternal great-grandfather, Nicolas Houdin, was a watchmaker of great merit in the last century. J. F. Houdin, his son, has gained, as is well known, a prominent place among the most distinguished watchmakers of his time. A certain modesty, which you will understand, prevents me from praising my father as highly; I shall only say

that he was a very skilful and ingenious watchmaker. Before devoting myself to the art of conjuring, based on mechanism, I,

*St. Perain, près Blois, le 6. 9<sup>ème</sup> 1860*

*Cher Boudilliat*

*Je m'attendais, ces jours derniers, à  
recevoir de vous un exemplaire de la  
Deuxième édition de mes Confidences; mais,  
ne voyant rien venir, j'en me disais à vous  
adresser cette question:*

*De mon livre adu mérite  
Près des lecteurs quelque mérite;  
Pourquoi l'Éditeur qui m'édite  
M'édite-il pour m'éditer?*

*Quoiqu'il en soit, cher Boudilliat,  
recevez les meilleures de mes amitiés et  
croyez-moi toujours*

*très dévoué*

*Robert Houdin*

too, was for a long time a watchmaker and achieved some success.

"With such genealogy, should one not be predestined to horology? Therefore my son was irresistibly drawn to his voca-

tion, and he took up the art which Berthoud and Bréguet have made famous. It was from the latter of the two celebrated masters that he learned the elements of the profession of his forefathers."

Emile was subsequently induced to take up the magic wand, and in conjunction with Professor Brannet gave many clever entertainments. During his management the old theatre\* in the Palais Royal was abandoned, and a new theatre erected on the Boulevard des Italiens. He held this property until his decease in 1883. The theatre was partly destroyed by fire, January 30, 1901, but was rebuilt.

The only surviving members of the family are Madame Emile Robert-Houdin, widow of the elder son, and a daughter who is married to M. Lemaitre Robert-Houdin, a municipal officer of Blois, who has adopted the name of Houdin. Robert-Houdin is interred in the cemetery of Blois. A handsome monument marks his grave.

At the Paris Exhibition of 1844, Houdin was awarded a medal for the ingenious construction of automata; at the Exhibition of 1855 he received a gold medal for his scientific application of electricity to clocks. He invented an ophthalmoscope to enable the operator to examine the interior of his own eye. From important papers in the possession of M. Lemaitre it seems more than probable that Houdin had worked out the secret of the modern telephone before it had been made known to the world at large.

Houdin has been considered of such importance and interest in France that in Didot's *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* a whole page is given him. His personal appearance is thus described in Larousse's *Encyclopédie*: "He was a man of small stature. His manners were engaging and vivacious. His face was clean-shaven, showing a large and eloquent mouth. In his old age,

\*Houdin's original theatre in the *Galerie de Valois* of the Palais Royal has long ago been swallowed up in the alterations made in the building. M. Trewcy, in the spring of 1905, met an old man, a former employee of the Palais, who remembered seeing Houdin perform in 1845-46, but he could not even locate the little theatre. How soon are the glories of the past forgotten by a fickle public. The theatre has been divided into two or three shops,

his head was covered with snow white hair. His eyes up to the last retained the fire and brilliancy of a man of twenty-five."

On December 6, 1905, the French Society of Magicians celebrated the hundredth anniversary of Houdin's birth. The exercises were held at the Theatre Robert-Houdin, Boulevard des Italiens, Paris. The little theatre was crowded with conjurers and their friends. Among the wielders of the magic staff were Caroly, the editor of *Illusioniste*, M. and Mme. de Gago, Folletto, M. and Mme. Talazac, and M. Raynaly. M. and Mme. Talazac, in their "mind-reading" act, evoked great applause. M. Miliès, the manager of the house, exhibited the automaton, "Antonio Diavolo," invented by Robert-Houdin. M. Renaly, the well-known drawing-room conjurer, read a poem in honor of the great master, at the close of which a bust of Robert-Houdin, which stood upon the stage, was crowned with a wreath of laurel. Strange to say, not a word of this interesting event was recorded in the newspapers.

Houdin was the first conjurer to be employed in an official capacity by a civilized Power. The second case we have record of was on the occasion of the English Mission to the late Sultan of Morocco when Mr. Douglas Beaufort was appointed conjurer to the party by the British Government. The object was to surprise the Arabs with the skill of an Anglo-Saxon prestidigitateur. During the journey to Fez from the coast, Mr. Beaufort gave a number of séances. The news of his necromantic powers soon spread like wild-fire among the natives. When the Embassy reached the Arab Capital, the Sultan refused to see the "Devil Man," as he termed the conjurer. He imagined that the British proposed to cast a spell over him. For eight weeks he held out, but finally curiosity got the better of him. The Grand Vizier was ordered to produce the Disciple of Beelzebub at the Royal Palace. The performance of Mr. Beaufort so delighted the ruler of Morocco that he presented him with a silver dagger, a fine Arabian steed from the royal stable, and a bag containing 500 dollars, as a token of esteem and regard.

## SOME OLD-TIME CONJURERS.

"As in Agrippa's magic glass,  
The loved and lost arose to view."—WHITTIER: *The Mermaid*.

I love to read about the old-time conjurers, the contemporaries of Robert-Houdin, or his immediate successors. Literature on the subject is very sparse indeed. In his memoirs, Houdin gives us a few thumbnail sketches of his rivals in the mystic art, and then dismisses them with a kindly, *Vale*. He has something to say about Bosco's personal appearance and performances, but makes no mention of the romantic incidents in the great magician's career. I shall try, in this chapter, to sketch the lives of some of these men, basing my information on rare *brochures* contained in the Ellison Library, and from information picked up by Mr. Harry Houdini in Europe. The great encyclopedic dictionary of Larousse—a monument of French erudition—contains something about Phillippe, Robin and Comte. Mr. Ellis Stanyon, a conjurer of London, and author of several valuable little treatises on magic, has kindly furnished me with interesting data; the files of old newspapers in the British Museum, and the Library of Congress have also been drawn upon, also the fine collection of old programmes of Mr. Arthur Margery, the English magician. Let us begin with

### COMTE.

Louis Apollinaire Comte was a magician of great skill, a mimic and ventriloquist. He was born in Geneva, Switzerland, June 22, 1788, and died at Rueil, France, November 25, 1859. On one occasion he was denounced by some superstitious Swiss peasants as a sorcerer, set upon and beaten with clubs, and was



about to be thrown into a lime kiln. His ventriloquial powers saved his life. He caused demoniacal voices to proceed from the kiln, whereupon his tormentors fled from the spot in affright, imagining that they were addressed by the Powers of Darkness.

When summoned to appear before Louis XVIII, at the palace of the Tuilleries, Comte arranged a clever mystification to amuse his royal patron. During the course of the entertainment he requested the king to select a card from a pack. By his address, he caused the monarch to draw the king of hearts. Placing the card in a pistol, Comte fired it at a bouquet of flowers on a table, declaring that the pasteboard would appear in the bouquet. Immediately, a bust of the king was seen among the flowers.

"What does this mean?" said Louis XVIII, with a sarcastic smile. "I fancy, sir, your trick has not ended as you stated."

"I beg your Majesty's pardon," Comte replied, with a profound bow. "I have quite kept my promise. I pledged myself that the king of hearts should appear in that bouquet of flowers, and I appeal to all Frenchmen whether that bust does not represent *the king of all hearts*."

The experiment was applauded to the echo by those present. The *Royal Journal* of the 20th of December, 1814, thus describes the affair.

"The whole audience exclaimed in reply to M. Comte, 'We recognize him—it is he—the king of all hearts! the beloved of the French—of the whole universe—Louis XVIII, the august descendant of Henri Quatre?'"

"The king, much affected by these warm acclamations, complimented M. Comte on his skill.

"'It would be a pity,' he said to him, 'to order such a talented sorcerer to be burnt alive. You have caused us too much pleasure for us to cause you pain. Live many years, for yourself in the first place, and then for us.'"

Comte was an adept at the art of flattery. Perhaps all the while, he and the fickle courtiers of the Tuilleries were secretly laughing at the poor old Bourbon king, the scion of a race that had all but ruined France, and were wishing back from Elba that Thunderbolt of War—Napoleon the Great.

Comte was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by Louis Philippe.

#### PHILLIPPE.

Phillippe [Talon] was born at Alais, near Nimes (France). He carried on the trade of confectioner first in Paris, afterwards in Aberdeen, Scotland. Failing to make a success of the sugar business, he adopted conjuring as a profession, and was remarkably successful. He was assisted by a young Scotchman named Macaister, who on the stage appeared as a negro, "Domingo." Macalister, a clever mechanic, invented many of the best things in Phillippe's repertoire. From some Chinese jugglers, Phillippe learned the gold-fish trick and the Chinese rings. With these capital experiments added to his programme, he repaired to Paris, in 1841, and made a great hit. Habited like a Chinaman, he performed them in a scene called "A night in the palace of Peking." The fish trick he ostentatiously named "Neptune's Basons, and the Gold Fish." The bowls of water containing the fish he produced from shawls while standing on a low table. He followed this with a production of rabbits, pigeons, ducks, and chickens.

Robert-Houdin, in his memoirs, gives a brief but pointed sketch of Phillippe. On page 163 I reproduce one of his unique programmes (London, March, 1846) :

#### ROBIN.

Henri Robin was a Hollander by birth, his real name being Dunkell. He was born about 1805 and died in Paris in 1874. Although he had appeared before the public many times and his talents as a prestidigitateur had long been recognized, it was not until the end of 1862, when he opened his theatre in Paris, that he became a celebrity and a household word in the country of his adoption. He was a man of distinguished appearance, very urbane, and possessed of a sparkling wit. His handsome little *salle de spectacle*, known as the Theatre Robin,\* was situated on

\*This theatre was demolished at the time of the enlargement of the Place de Chateau d'Eau.

# NEW STRAND THEATRE

Lessee, M. PHILLIPPE, 4 Strand Lane

## TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS

# PHILLIPPE'S SOIRÉES MYSTÉRIEUSES

The Entertainments will commence with M. PHILLIPPE's Celebrated and Unrivalled

## TOURS DE PHYSIQUE

AND ASTOUNDING FEATS OF

## MAGICAL DELUSION!

Which he has exhibited in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, St. Petersburg, and before all the Courts of Europe, with truly unparalleled Success.

THE ENTERTAINMENT WILL BE DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS

### PART FIRST

Will comprise peculiar and unequalled

## Metamorphoses and Delusions!

And Astonishing Deceptions!

INCLUDING

The Miller of Amsterdam

The Obedient Cards

Il Diavolo

The Rose Tree of Granada

The Flying Watches

The Modern Confectioner

The Enchanted Handkerchief

The Grand Distribution

The Accomplished Harlequin

New Method of Making Coffee

Concluding with the universally admired and elegant Tour d'Adresse, entitled

### THE NATIONAL FLAG

There will be an interval of Fifteen Minutes between the Parts

### PART SECOND

## A NIGHT IN THE PALACE OF PEKIN!

In which Mons. PHILLIPPE will perform some of the most Extraordinary and Startling

### INDIAN AND CHINESE EXPERIMENTS

Ever attempted by any European, comprising

The Turtle Dove and the Fly-  
ing Handkerchiefs

La Fille des Fleurs

Kitchen of Parapharagaramus

PAS DE CARACTERE

BY

La Fille des Fleurs

The Inexhaustible Hat

And concluding with the celebrated DELUSION

## Les Bassins de Neptune et les Poissons d'or AND THE GRAND MENAGERIE!

Unanimously pronounced to be the most inexplicable and surprising Tour de Physique ever witnessed

the Boulevard du Temple. Porcelain medallions ornamented the walls, representing Archimides, Galileo, Palissy, Vaucanson, Franklin, Volta, Newton, Daguerre, Arago, Cuvier, Robertson, Humboldt, Comte, and Cagliostro. Of these great men only Vaucanson, Robertson, and Cagliostro could properly be classed as magicians. Vaucanson was a builder of ingenious automata;



HENRI ROBIN.

Robertson the creator of optical illusions; and Cagliostro a pretender to sorcery, who made use of hypnotism and phantasmagoria in his séances. But science has its wizards, in one sense of the word, and so Robin included the great pioneers of scientific research among his galaxy of wonder-workers.

The journal *La France* said in its issue of January 19, 1863: "The stage is large and square in form, the curtain rises upon

a brilliantly lighted salon showing much gilding, filled with strange objects, electrical apparatus of all sizes, mysterious chests, revolving tables, articulated animals which as far surpass the automaton of Vaucanson as an Everard or Pleyel piano is superior to an old fashioned spinet. There were peacocks which paraded up and down and could tell you the name of any city you might think of; drums which beat the retreat without a drummer; Christmas trees which shook their branches, powdered with snow, and covered themselves with lighted candles, bonbons, flowers and toys; inexhaustible bottles, invisible bells, etc. Altogether it was the strange, supernatural and fantastic world of prestidigitation, magic and sorcery.

\* \* \*

"All at once, from the bottom of a magic casket, leaped out a harlequin about ten inches high but so well proportioned in its figure, so well made, so nimble and supple, so intelligent and *spirituel*, that the whole audience uttered a cry of pleasure and admiration. This pretty little manikin does everything belonging to its character. It dances, smokes, frisks about, takes off and puts on its mask, bows to the company and plays the flageolet. One is tempted to say—'it only needs speech to be human.' Well, it has speech. It talks and answers all questions addressed to it like a real person. It even tells stories, making them up as it goes along."

Besides the show of magic an "agioscope" was to be seen which projected upon a screen the history of creation in forty-five pictures. Robin also performed experiments in physics and chemistry and an exhibition of the ghost illusion closed the entertainment.

Robin and Robert-Houdin were at odds about the inexhaustible bottle which each claimed to have invented. Robert-Houdin declared that he had exhibited it for the first time on December 1, 1847, while Robin produced his "Almanach of Cagliostro," showing the trick of the inexhaustible bottle which he declares he had invented and exhibited for the first time July 6, 1844, at the theatre Re at Milan. Nevertheless in all their lectures

on physics, scientific men explain to their hearers the operation of the Robert-Houdin bottle.\*

When the Davenport Brothers, pretended spiritualists, came to Paris, Robin duplicated all their tricks at his theatre. He did much to discredit the charlatans. About 1869 he gave up his theatre, and became the proprietor of a hotel on the Boulevard Mazas.

Robin left three works, copies of which are very rare, viz: *L'Almanach Illustré de Cagliostro; Histoire des Spectres Vivants et Impalpables; Secret de la Physique Amusante* (Paris, 1864). He was also the inventor of a railroad for ascending Mount Rigi in Switzerland. The motor in this system was a balloon which, by its ascensional force compelled the car to climb the ascent guided by four iron rails. A model of this contrivance was exhibited at Robin's theatre, 49 Boulevard du Temple.

#### BOSCO.

I look again into the magic mirror of the past. Who is this portly figure enveloped in a befrogged military cloak? He has the mobile visage of an Italian. There is an air of pomposity about him. His eyes are bold and piercing. He has something of the appearance of a Russian nobleman, or general under the Empire. Ah, that is the renowned Bosco, the conjurer!

Bartolomeo Bosco had an adventurous career.† He was born in Turin, Italy, January 11, 1793. He came of a noble family of Piedmont. At the age of nineteen he was one of the

\*"It is remarkable how many of the illusions regarded as the original inventions of eminent conjurers have been really improvements of older tricks. 'Hocus Pocus Junior,' *the Anatomy of Legerdemain* (4th edition, 1654), gives an explanatory cut of a method of drawing different liquors out of a single tap in a barrel, the barrel being divided into compartments, each having an air-hole at the top, by means of which the liquor in any of the compartments was withheld or permitted to flow. Robert-Houdin applied the principle to a wine-bottle held in his hand, from which he could pour four different liquids, regulated by the unstopping of any of the four tiny air holes which were covered by his fingers. A large number of very small liquor glasses being provided on trays, and containing drops of certain flavoring essences, enabled him to supply imitations of various wines and liquors, according to the glasses with which he poured syrup from the bottle."—*Encyclopædia Britannica*.

†*Cabinetto magico del Cavalieri Bartolomeo Bosco de Torino. Milano, 1854.*

victims caught in the meshes of the great military drag-net of Napoleon I, that fisher for men. In other words, he became "food for powder" in the Russian campaign of the Emperor of



Bosco.

(From a Rare Engraving in the Possession of Dr. Saram R. Ellison,  
New York City.)

France. He was a fusilier in the 11th infantry of the line. At the battle of Borodino, in an encounter with Cossacks, Bosco was badly wounded in the side by a lance, and fell upon the ground. A son of the Cossack lancer who had wounded him,

dismounted and began to rifle his pockets. Like all soldiers on a campaign, Bosco carried his fortune with him. It did not amount to very much: a watch, a keepsake from a sweetheart, a few gold pieces, a tobacco pouch, etc. Fearing to receive the *coup de grace* from his enemy, he pretended to be dead. But on realizing that if he were robbed of his money he would be left destitute in the world, he put his abilities as a conjurer to work and dexterously picked the Cossack's pocket of a well-filled purse. It was a case of Greek meeting Greek. The Russian, grumbling, perhaps, at the paucity of his ill-gotten plunder, finally mounted his horse and rode away after his comrades, to discover later on that he had been *done* and by a corpse. Later in the day Bosco was picked up from the battlefield by the Russian medical corps, and his wounds treated. He was sent a captive to Siberia, near the town of Tobolsk. His talent for *escamotage* served him well. The long winter evenings of his captivity when the snow lay deep upon the earth, and the wind howled about the prison walls, were spent by him either amusing his jailors or his fellow-soldiers. He sometimes gave exhibitions of his skill before the high officials of the place, thereby picking up considerable money. He spent his earnings generously upon his poorer brethren. Finally, in April, 1814, he was released. He returned to Italy, to the great delight of his friends, and studied medicine. Eventually he abandoned the art of Esculapius for the art of Trismegistus and became a professional conjurer.

Bosco was a wonderful performer of the cup-and-ball trick. He also possessed great skill with cards and coins. He traveled all over Europe. He gave an exhibition before Marie Louise, the widow of Napoleon I, on the 27th of April, 1836. His sonorous, bizarre name has become a byword in France for deception, whether in conjuring or politics. The statesman Thiers was called the "Bosco of the Tribune." Many of Bartolomeo Bosco's imitators assumed his cognomen. At the present day there is a French magician touring the music halls of Europe, who calls himself Bosco. The original Bosco, like Alexander Herrmann, was in the habit of advertising himself by giving impromptu exhibitions of his skill in cafés, stage



coaches, hotels, etc. He was wonderfully clever at this. A Parisian newspaper thus announced one of his entertainments: "The famous Bosco, who can conjure away a house as easily as a nutmeg, is about to give his performances at Paris, in which some miraculous tricks will be executed." This illusion to the nutmeg has reference to the magician's cup-and-ball trick; nutmegs frequently being used instead of cork balls. Houdin describes Bosco's stage as follows:

"I entered the little theatre and took my seat. According to the idea I had formed of a magician's laboratory, I expected to find myself before a curtain whose large folds, when withdrawn, would display before my dazzled eyes a brilliant stage ornamented with apparatus worthy of the celebrity announced; but my illusions on this subject soon faded away.

"A curtain had been considered superfluous, and the stage was open. Before me was a long three-storied sideboard, entirely covered with black serge. This lugubrious buffet was adorned with a number of wax candles, among which glistened the apparatus. At the topmost point of this strange *étagère* was a death's-head, much surprised, I have no doubt, at finding itself at such a festival, and it quite produced the effect of a funeral service.

"In front of the stage, and near the spectators, was a table covered by a brown cloth, reaching to the ground, on which five brass cups were symmetrically arranged. Finally, above this table hung a copper ball, which strangely excited my curiosity.

"For the life of me I could not imagine what this was for, so I determined to wait till Bosco came to explain it. The silvery sound of a small bell put an end to my reverie, and Bosco appeared upon the stage.

"The artiste wore a little black velvet jacket, fastened round the waist by a leathern belt of the same color. His sleeves were excessively short, and displayed a handsome arm. He had on loose black trousers, ornamented at the bottom with a ruche of lace, and a large white collar round his neck. This strange attire bore considerable resemblance to the classical costume of the Scapins in our plays.

"After making a majestic bow to his audience, the celebrated conjurer walked silently and with measured steps up to the famous copper ball. After convincing himself it was solidly hung, he took up his wand, which he wiped with a white hand-



HOUDINI AT THE GRAVE OF BOSCO.

(From a Photograph in the Possession of Dr. Saram R. Ellison,  
New York City.)

kerchief, as if to remove any foreign influence; then, with imperturbable gravity, he struck the ball thrice with it, pronouncing, amid the most solemn silence, this imperious sentence: *Spiriti mei infernali, obedite.*

"I, like a simpleton, scarce breathed in my expectation of some miraculous result, but it was only an innocent pleasantry, a simple introduction to the performance with the cups."

After many wanderings Bartolomeo Bosco laid down his magic wand in Dresden, March 2, 1862. He lies buried in a cemetery on Friederichstrasse. Mr. Harry Houdini, the American conjurer, located the grave on October 23, 1903. Upon the tombstone is carved the insignia of Bosco's profession—a cup-and-ball and a wand. They are encircled by a wreath of laurel. Says Mr. Houdini, in a letter to *Mahatma*: "I found the head of the wand missing. Looking into the tall grass near by I discovered the broken tip." This relic he presented to Dr. Saramé R. Ellison, of New York (1904). The tombstone bears the following inscription: *Ici repose le célèbre Bartolomeo Bosco. . . Ne à Turin le 11 Janvier, 1793; décédé à Dresden le 2 Mars, 1862.* Madame Bosco was interred in the same grave with her husband, but no mention of her is made on the stone. The small plot of ground where the grave is situated was leased for a term of years. That term had long expired when Mr. Houdini discovered the last resting place of Bosco. It was offered for sale. In the event of its purchase the remains of the conjurer and his wife would have been transferred to a section of the cemetery set apart for the neglected dead. But Houdini prevented all future possibility of this by buying the lot in fee. He then deeded it to the Society of American Magicians.

#### ANDERSON.

John Henry Anderson was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, July 14, 1814. He began life as an actor. After witnessing a performance in England by Signor Blitz, his mind was struck with the resources of magic as a means of entertaining the public, and adding to his own exchequer. So he abandoned the histrionic stage for conjuring, though he occasionally performed in melodrama as a side issue. He was very fine in the title rôle of "Rob Roy," and as William, in "Black-eyed Susan." His professional sobriquet in his early career was that of the "Calidonian Necromancer." On one occasion he gave an exhibition



part of the 18th century. All that Anderson did was to invent his own peculiar method of working the illusion. "The extraordinary mystery of the trick," he said, "is not effected by the aid of any accomplice, or by inserting a tube in the muzzle of the gun, or by other conceivable devices (as the public frequently, and in some instances, correctly imagine), but any gentleman may really load the gun in the usual manner, inserting, himself, a marked real leaden ball! The gun being then fired off at the Wizard, he will instantly produce and exhibit the same bullet in his hand." The marked leaden bullet, however, was exchanged for one composed of an amalgam of tinfoil and quicksilver, which was as heavy as lead, but was broken into bits and dispersed in firing. He once played a private engagement at the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, before the Czar Nicholas and a brilliant audience of Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses. His exhibition of second sight was an excellent one. He was asked by the Czar to describe the watch he had in his pocket. To the profound astonishment of the Emperor, Anderson announced that it was encircled with one hundred and twenty brilliants around its face, and a portrait on enamel of the Emperor Paul at the back. He also said that the watch carried by the Empress did not go, which was a fact, it being a very old one, a relic of Peter the Great. It was only worn as an ornament. The wizard never claimed supernatural powers. He undoubtedly obtained his information about the chronometers from some member of the Czar's household, and worked upon the imagination and credulity of the spectators.

Anderson had an indomitable spirit which no misfortune could daunt. He received the "bludgeonings of Fate" like a hero, and was "Captain of his soul" through a thousand and one vicissitudes of life. He built on Glasgow Green one of the largest theatres in Scotland, and it was burnt to the ground, three months after its erection. A fortune was lost in the terrible fire. In 1851 he came to America and met with unbounded success. Returning to England in 1856, he engaged Covent Garden Theatre. In March of that year this great play-house was destroyed by fire, and Anderson lost his splendid and costly ap-

paratus. On top of this disaster came the bankruptcy of the Royal British Bank, and that event completely swallowed up the remains of the wizard's fortune. But he was undaunted. Borrowing funds from his friends, he bought new paraphernalia, and toured the world. After an absence of five years he returned to England, January 11, 1863. He had traveled 235,000 miles and "had passed through his hands the enormous sum of £157,000 sterling." He died at Darlington, Scotland, on Tuesday, February 3, 1874. In accordance with a wish expressed during his last illness, he was buried at Aberdeen, in the same grave with his beloved mother. No inscription on the tombstone records the fact that the Wizard of the North lies beneath.

What was the secret of Anderson's success?

He was not a great magician in the sense of the word—that is to say, an adept at legerdemain, an original creative genius like Houdin, Robin, and the elder Herrmann. But he was an actor who played the role of necromancer with great effect. He surrounded himself with costly and brilliant apparatus which dazzled the eyes of the groundlings. His baggage weighed tons and filled many trunks and boxes. He believed in heavy artillery, like Napoleon I. The dashing Hussar style was not his. That branch of conjuring belongs to Frikell and De Kolta. Strange to say, in spite of the revolution in the art of magic since Anderson's day, we are coming back to the big paraphernalia of the old school. The public is tired of small tricks. A discussion of this subject will be found in the article on Frikell.

I doubt whether a greater advertiser than Anderson ever lived. Bosco cannot be compared to him. Alexander Herrmann depended on his social qualities and his laughable adventures in street cars, cafés, and clubs to boom his reputation. Anderson adopted the methods of the patent-medicine manufacturers. He would have made an excellent advance agent for a new panacea. He literally plastered the streets and walls of London with his advertising devices. Some of them were highly ingenious and amusing and kept the public on the *qui vive* with excitement. In this line of puffing, people are willing to overlook charlatantry. One of his posters was a caricature imitation of the famous paint-

ing, "Napoleon's Return from Elba." It was of gigantic size. Houdin describes it and other advertising schemes as follows:

"In the foreground Anderson was seen affecting the attitude of the great man; above his head fluttered an enormous banner, bearing the words 'The Wonder of the World,' while, behind him, and somewhat lost in the shade, the Emperor of Russia and several other monarchs stood in a respectful posture. As in the original picture, the fanatic admirers of the Wizard embraced his knees, while an immense crowd received him triumphantly. In the distance could be seen the equestrian statue of the Iron Duke, who, hat in hand, bowed before him, the Great Wizard; and, lastly, the very dome of St. Paul's bent towards him most humbly.

"At the bottom was the inscription,

'RETURN OF THE NAPOLEON OF NECROMANCY.'

"Regarded seriously, this picture would be found a puff in very bad taste; but, as a caricature, it is excessively comic. Besides, it had the double result of making the London public laugh, and bringing a great number of shillings into the skillful puffer's pockets.

"When Anderson is about to leave a town where he has exhausted all his resources, and has nothing more to hope, he still contrives to make one more enormous haul.

"He orders from the first jeweller in the town a silver vase, worth twenty or twenty-five pounds; he hires, for one evening only, the largest theatre or room in the town, and announces that in the Wizard's parting performance the spectators will compete to make the best pun.

"The silver vase is to be the prize of the victor.

"A jury is chosen among the chief people of the town to decide with the public on the merits of each pun.

"It is agreed that they will applaud if they think a pun good; they will say nothing to a passable one, but groan at a bad one.

"The room is always crowded, for people come less to see the performance, which they know by heart, than to display their wit publicly. Each makes his jest, and receives a greeting more or less favorable; and, lastly, the vase is decreed to the cleverest among them.

"Any other than Anderson would be satisfied with the enormous receipts his performance produces; but the Great Wizard of the North has not finished yet. Before the audience leaves the house he states that a short-hand writer has been hired by him to take down all the puns, and that they will be published as a Miscellany.

"As each spectator who has made a joke likes to see it in print, he purchases a copy of the book for a shilling. An idea of the number of these copies may be formed from the number of puns they contain. I have one of these books in my possession, printed in Glasgow in 1850, in which there are 1091 of these facetiæ."

Here is one of Anderson's typical programmes, dated 1854:

## MUSIC HALL, LEEDS

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# VICTORY!!

£0,139 of the inhabitants of Leeds have SURRENDERED to Marshal Professor Anderson during the past Fortnight.

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# LAST 11 NIGHTS

## OF THE GREAT WIZARD

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**EXCITEMENT EXTRAORDINARY!**

ALL LEEDS MORE ASTONISHED THAN THE

**RUSSIANS WERE AT SEBASTOPOL!**

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In order to avoid being incommoded, Visitors to the Front Seats are respectfully requested to secure places at the Hall during the day.

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# PROFESSOR ANDERSON

Begs respectfully to inform the inhabitants of Leeds, that in consequence of having made arrangements to perform in St. George's Hall, Bradford, on Monday, October 23rd, he cannot possibly appear in Leeds after Saturday, October 21st.—  
The following will be the order of

## The Last Eleven Days of Wonders

**This Evening, MONDAY, Oct. 9th, 1854, LAST NIGHT but 10.**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10th, LAST NIGHT BUT 9.**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11th, LAST NIGHT BUT 8.**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12th, LAST NIGHT BUT 7.**

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13th, LAST NIGHT BUT 6.**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14th, LAST NIGHT BUT 5.**

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 16th, LAST NIGHT BUT 4.**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17th, LAST NIGHT BUT 3.**

**(Wednesday, October 18th, No Performance, the Hall being pre-engaged.)**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19th, LAST NIGHT BUT 2.**

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20th, LAST NIGHT BUT 1.**

**And SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21st, THE LAST GRAND AND FINAL  
FAREWELL NIGHT!**



**REMEMBER** you cannot look upon his like again!

---

## **PROGRAMME**

**Professor Anderson** begs to inform his Patrons that his performances are not Superhuman, as supposed, but the result of Science, applied in a new way to produce the delusive results, in connection with his Ambidexterological Powers, which make the "Eyes the fools o' the other senses," and will this evening be the "Head and front of his offending."

### **THE ANNIHILATION AND RECUPERATION**

OR GRAND HYDRAULIC EXPERIMENT,

### **THE SCRAP BOOK**

With Original and Yankee Scraps showing the Economy of Space.

### **SECOND SIGHT, OR CLAIRVOYANCE**

With the Crystal Casket, vulgarly called the Devil's Box.

**THE GREAT CHEMICAL ANALYSIS** with Evaporating Handkerchiefs

### **OH! MY HAT!**

Great Pot Pourri of Handkerchiefs in the Magic Laundry, and

### **THAT BOTTLE**

BRANDY,  
IRISH WHISKEY,

SCOTCH WHISKEY,  
RUM,

GENEVA,  
ENGLISH GIN,

### **The New Cradle, or Mesmeric Sleep,**

Strongly recommended for the Nursery, where there are "squalls."

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#### **INTERVAL OF TEN MINUTES**

During the Interval, the **Wizard's Handbook of Magic**, price 1s., with an explanation of upwards of 250 Magical Delusions, an Exposee of Gambling, Spirit Rapping, Table Turning, &c., illustrated with upwards of 100 Diagrams, &c., showing the construction of the necessary Apparatus; Also, **The Wizard in Paris**, being Professor Anderson's Narrative of a Recent Visit to the French Capital, descriptive of the place, and throwing new light upon the people.—A guide for all who are going there, and a pleasant book for those who have been. May be had of Professor Anderson's Assistants.

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The Wizard will again enter his "**PSYCHOMANTEUM**," and commence Part Two with his Great

### **MECHANICAL AUTOMATON**

Or **FORTUNE TELLER**, in connection with the **SPIRIT RAPPING BELL** and **TABLE**!

Although the Wizard is not a great Orator or Lecturer, he will deliver a few remarks on what is called

### **SPIRITUALISM!**

Or Humbug of the First Water, proving that there are still greater humbugs in England than himself, for which he is very sorry, he thinking that he was the Ne Plus Ultra in that particular line of business.

#### **ANIMAL MAGNETISM ?**

### **THE GREAT WATCH WONDER**

Proving the thickness of some skulls, with the Astonishing Miracle, "**Anderson's** (not Pandora's) Box. The whole of this Unparalleled Entertainment will conclude with the

**Magic Evaporation, or Disappearance Extraordinary**

## BLITZ.

Signor Antonio Blitz was born June 21, 1810, in a little village of Moravia. At an early age he picked up, unknown to anyone, "a few adroit tricks from certain gypsies, who visited his native town." He began to exhibit these feats for the amusement of himself and friends. He made his professional début at Hamburg when but thirteen years of age, and was known to the public as the "mysterious boy." His first appearance in this country was at the Music Hall, Broadway, New York. He had many imitators. Not less than thirteen people traveled the United States using his name, circulating a verbatim copy of his handbill and advertisement—"not only assuming to be the *original* Blitz, but in many instances claiming to be a son or nephew." "I have been," says Blitz, in his memoirs, *Fifty Years in the Magic Circle*, (Hartford, Conn., 1871), "in constant receipt of bills of their contracting, for, not content with taking my name, they have not even honor enough to pay their debts." The thirteen impostors exhibited under the following and other names:

Signor Blitz.  
Signor Blitz, Jr.  
Signor Blitz, The Original.  
Signor Blitz's Son.  
Signor Blitz's Nephew.  
Signor Blitz, The Wonderful.  
Signor Blitz, The Great.  
Signor Blitz, The Unrivalled.  
Signor Blitz, The Mysterious.  
Signor Blitz, By Purchase.  
Signor Blitz, The Great Original.

Blitz was not only a magician, but a ventriloquist and trainer of birds. He relates an amusing encounter with the great but eccentric genius, the Italian violinist, Paganini, whose romantic life is known to all lovers of music. The adventure took place in the city of Glasgow, Scotland, where Paganini was giving a concert. Says Blitz: "He, Paganini, was tall and awkward-looking, cadaverous in features, ungainly in form, with long

black hair, said to be very wealthy, and characterized as extremely penurious. No instance was ever known of his contributing a penny to the distressed, or to a benevolent institution. One

*Facsimile Reproduction of the Programme of Signor Blitz.*

## **Mrs. Thornhill.**

An extraordinary **HER BENEFIT** to the Ladies & Gentlemen of **FRANCE**, **ENGLAND**, **SCOTLAND**, & the **Provinces** in General has the Pleasure to inform them that,

### **SIGNOR BLITZ,**

has kindly offered his **WONDERFUL PERFORMANCES** (For this Night only) in Aid of the receipt of that Evening. He will go through some 20 tricks of **ART & MAGIC** which has not yet been performed by him since his appearance in this part of the country. He will also on the same occasion introduce the **CELEBRATED GUN TRICK**, and Gentlemen being allowed to bring their own **POWDERING PIECE**, **POWDER**, & **BALL**, & to fire at any part of his Show.

*The Licensed,*

Pottery Theatre. (SWAN INN) Hanley.

On Tuesday Evening, Aug. 10th. 1830.

The Performances this Evening will commence with

## **SIGNOR BLITZ,**

FROM MORAVIA

*Professor of*

**MECHANISM & METAMORPHORIST,**

FROM THE THEATRE ROYAL, LONDON.

## **THAUMATURGICS;**

And Many other Performances too numerous to insert.

In the Course of the Evening, SIGNOR BLITZ, WILL Command any Article to

**Fly at the Rate of 500 Miles a Minute!**

The SIGNOR WILL ALSO

**Perform With THREE HANDS!**

The Tricks with

*A Bushel of Rice, The Magnetic Die,*

*The Diving Bell: & Learned Half-Crowns.*

To conclude with the *Gun Trick & the Dancing of five Dinner Plates.*

## **A Dance by Miss Thornhill.**

A New article will be brought forward the interesting Male Drama, called

## **CLARI,** **The Maid of Milan.**

Duke Viraldi — Mr. Wood.

Soliman—Mr. Burton. Joseph—Mr. C. Thornhill. Nicolo—Mr. Fisher.

Gervase—Mr. Thornhill. Nigredo—Mr. Barrett. Paga—Mr. Walton.

Clari (the Maid of Milan) — Miss M. Thornhill.

CHARACTERS in one EPISODE.

Melchior — Mr. Beattie. Fulgine — Mr. Fisher.

Adeline — Mrs. Wood. Vangelia — Miss Thornhill.

Wido — Miss Thornhill. Lucio — Mrs. Wood.

Places: every seat had of Mr. C. Thornhill at Mrs. Green's Wall Street, of the Inn.

To be kept at half past 7 o'Clock, Promptly. Pit 3s. Gal. 1s.

THE BAND WILL ATTEND IN UNIFORM.

### PLAY BILL.

(From the Collection of Mr. Ellis Stanyon, London, England.)

morning I called and found him quietly seated in his room alone. After conversing with him a short time I noticed his violin case lying upon the table, when suddenly the cry of a child issued from therein.

" 'Who is that?' said Paganini, quickly looking around.

" 'It is *me*, with the babe,' answered a womanly voice.

" 'My God! what is this?' inquired the astonished violinist.

" 'You well know,' plaintively answered the woman, at the same time the infant again commenced crying.

" 'We know you are a bad woman,' vehemently declared the excited man.

" 'And did you not make me so, you old Italian fiddler?'

"After this there was apparently a commotion in the box, when Paganini became alarmed and was about to leave the room when I unmasked myself and explained that he had been a victim to the vagaries of ventriloquism; which, on hearing, delighted him prodigiously, and grasping me by the hand he exclaimed, 'Bravo, Signor!—bravo!'

Signor Blitz retired from the stage with a fortune and settled in Philadelphia. His home was on Green street near 18th street. He taught magic and gave private entertainments for some years before his death, which took place February, 1877. One of his daughters was the famous opera singer, Madame Vanzant, who at the present writing lives in Europe. These facts I obtained from Mr. Thomas Yost.

#### ALEXANDER.

Alexander Heimbürger was born December 4, 1819, in Germany. He performed under the *nom de théâtre* of Herr Alexander. He toured Europe, North and South America with great success for a number of years, and retired to his native land with a large fortune. He is at present residing at Munster, an old man of eighty-four, with snow-white hair and beard, and bent over with age. He was long supposed to be dead by the fraternity of magicians, but Mr. Houdini, in his tour of Germany in 1903, discovered that he still lived, and his whereabouts. Alexander had many strange stories to relate of his adventures in America and other places. He was personally acquainted with Houdin, Frikell, Bosco, Anderson, Blitz, the original Bamberg of Amsterdam, etc. He performed several times at the White House before President Polk, and hobnobbed with Henry Clay, Webster and Calhoun.

With letters from Polk he visited Brazil, and was admitted into the most aristocratic circles. On leaving New York in 1847 he was presented with a heavy gold medal, cast in the United States Mint at Washington. This medal has his portrait on one side, and on the reverse the following inscription:



ALEXANDER HEIMBÜRGER.

“Presented to Herr Alexander as a token of esteem from his friends. New York, 1847.”

Mr. Houdini writes as follows about the old magician (*Mahatma*, June, 1903): “He was a welcome guest at the Palace of the King of Brazil. He showed me letters to him from King **Pedro II** and his wife, dated Brazil, 1850. After an absence **years** from his native country he returned, and married. **With** six children, two sons and four daughters.

One is in New York at the present time. While in New York, Alexander was approached by an illusionist named Orzini, who had a cabinet of mystery. He was in hard circumstances and came to Alexander for assistance. The genial German gave him ten dollars. Orzini secured an engagement at the Park Theatre, but alas, only played one night, as his act did not suit, so he was closed after his first performance. Said Alexander to me, and the statement caused me infinite surprise: 'This Orzini was the man who threw the bomb at Napoleon III in Paris, trying to kill the Emperor, but was himself killed; also blowing up several bystanders, and wounding the horses of Napoleon's carriage. The reporters discovered that Orzini had just arrived from America, and in his lodgings they found some kind of a mysterious glass house, which must have been the Illusion Cabinet. In this affair Napoleon escaped with his life and a few scratches.' "

This is a strange story. I am of the opinion that Herr Alexander is laboring under a mistake in trying to identify the illusionist Orzini with the celebrated revolutionist Orsini. In the first place, there is the different spelling of the names—"Orzini" and "Orsini"; but Mr. Houdini may have incorrectly reported Alexander in this respect. There is no record of Orsini having come to the United States. Again, he was not killed in the attempted assassination of Napoleon III, in the rue Lepelletier, Paris, January 14, 1858. He was captured and suffered imprisonment, and was guillotined March 13, 1858. While in prison he wrote his memoirs.

Herr Alexander is the author of a work entitled *Der Moderne Zauberer* ("The Modern Magician").

#### FRIKELL.

Wiljalba Frikell was born in Scpio, a village of Finland, in 1818. His family was well-to-do and gave him advantages in the way of education. He graduated at the High School of Munich in 1840, in his twenty-second year. During his scholastic days he became interested in legerdemain, and read with avidity every work on the subject he could find. He attended

the performances of all conjurers who came to Munich. Refusing to study for one of the learned professions, greatly to the disappointment of his parents, he went on the stage, and visited the principal cities of Europe, after which he journeyed to Egypt. In the land of the pyramids Frikell had the honor of performing before Mehemit Ali, who presented him with a gold medal. Returning to Europe he visited Greece, Italy, and Spain. Subsequently he went to India and investigated the thaumaturgy of the fakirs. He made his first appearance in London in 1851,



PROF. WILJALBA FRIKELL'S CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT.

(As Exhibited Before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle.)

and performed before Queen Victoria and the Royal Family. at Windsor Castle. His broken German and peculiarity of manner caused him to be described by *Punch* as "a comic Charles Matthews." The same journal also compared him to "a monster raven in full dress for evening party." His success was marked. The Czar of Russia presented Frikell with a diamond ring of great value, and the King of Denmark made him a Knight of Dannebrog. Just when this remarkable man retired from the stage I have been unable to ascertain. In his old age he became

a recluse and denied himself to visitors. In fact, it was supposed by the profession that he was dead, until Mr. Houdini discovered his whereabouts in Krotschenbroda, a few miles from Dresden, Germany, February, 1903, and called at his villa, but did not succeed in obtaining an interview. Nine months later Frikell died. He contemplated writing his memoirs *à la* Robert-Houdin, but, alas, death cut short the undertaking. That they would have been extremely entertaining and full of curious incidents of travel, admits of no doubt. An extract from a letter written by Mr. Houdini to his American friend, H. S. Thompson, of Chicago, will prove of interest to the reader.

"Dresden, Oct. 20, 1903.

"I have some news for you that may be of interest. You may remember that I sought an interview last February with Dr. Wiljalba Frikell, but was unable to meet him. Since then we have been in correspondence, and he wrote me that if I ever came to Dresden he would be pleased to see me. On arriving in Dresden I sent him word that I would call upon him on October 10th last. I accordingly went to the Villa Frikell about 1 o'clock, and you can imagine with what sorrow and astonishment I learned that Dr. Frikell had died of heart failure three hours before. He was awaiting my arrival at the time. Fate willed it that I should see Herr Frikell, but that we should not speak to each other.

"He was buried on October 13th. I attended the funeral and laid two large wreaths on his grave; one on behalf of the Society of American Magicians, and the other from myself. The S. A. M. wreath was the largest and handsomest there.

"Herr Frikell was 87 years old and had made all arrangements to live to 100. He always claimed he would live to over 100 years and would tell why he expected to reach that age. Too bad we could not have held a conversation ere he departed this life.

"Sincerely yours,

"HARRY HOUDINI."

Frikell was an innovator in the art of magic. He dispensed with apparatus. In his *Lessons in Magic*, he says: "The use of complicated and cumbersome apparatus, to which modern conjurers have become addicted, not only greatly diminishes the amount of astonishment they are enabled to produce,—a defect which is not compensated by the external splendor and imposing effect of such paraphernalia,—but the useful lesson, how fallible our senses are, by means the most ordinary and at everybody's command, is entirely lost. It has been my object



in my performances to restore the art to its original province, and to extend that to a degree which it has, I believe, never yet hitherto reached. I banish all such mechanical and scientific preparations from my own practice, confining myself for the most part to the objects and materials of every day life. The success I have met with emboldens me to believe that I have followed the right path."

There is more or less truth in what Frikell says. But one can go to extremes in the avoidance of magic paraphernalia. The happy course is the middle one—a combination of sleight of hand and apparatus. I quote, as follows, from an article by Prof. Hoffmann (*Mahatma*): "The scientific school of conjuring, of which Robert-Houdin was the originator, had its drawbacks. It involved the use of costly and cumbersome paraphernalia, which grew and grew in quantity, till we find Anderson, the Wizard of the North, traveling with seven tons of luggage! Further, a trick, which, like Robert-Houdin's automatic figures, obviously depends upon ingenious mechanism, palls upon the spectator. Such figures, at the present day, would be no more regarded as magic than the Strasburg clock. Lastly his electrical tricks produced an extraordinary effect, because very few persons in his day were acquainted with the properties of electricity, but now that there are electric bells in every household, and electrical motor cars in every street, its magical prestige exists no longer.

"Hence a reaction to a severer and simpler school of conjuring, of which Wiljalba Frikell was the earliest exponent, the school which professes, so far as the public is concerned, to work without apparatus and which in fact reduces its apparatus to the smallest possible dimensions. Many high class performers now give what is known in England as a 'carpet bag' show, and will keep an audience wonder bound for a couple of hours, using no more apparatus than can be carried in an ordinary gripsack.

"Broadly speaking this is undoubtedly an advance, for of two performers, the one who can produce by the magic of his own fingers the same degree of illusion for which the other needs elaborate apparatus, the former is surely the greater artist. But

ST. JAMES' THEATRE

(LONDON, 1851)

PROFESSOR WILJALBA FRIKELL

Appointed Physicien to their Majesties the  
Emperor and Empress of Russia

NEW ENTERTAINMENT OF

PHYSICAL AND NATURAL MAGIC

(WITHOUT THE AID OF ANY APPARATUS)

ENTITLED

TWO HOURS OF ILLUSIONS

- 1.—The Secret Power and Wonderful Appearance
- 2.—You Shall and Must Laugh
- 3.—The Drunken Bracelet
- 4.—Something for Everybody and the Pleasant Pastime
- 5.—Time in a Fix

INTERVAL

- 1.—The Little Devil and the Secret Dispatch
- 2.—Aladdin's Magic Lamp
- 3.—Grand Military Manœuvre, or the Courage of  
Prof. Frikell
- 4.—Das Geheimnisz, and Flight in the Air
- 5.—The Children's Delight and Christmas Presents of  
Prof. Wiljalba Frikell

THE ABOVE IS A COPY OF ONE OF FRIKELL'S PROGRAMMES.

the striving for simplicity may be overdone. The performer is apt to lose his feeling for breadth of effect, and to fritter away his skill over illusions too minute and too soon over to make any permanent impression. One of the most skilful sleight of hand performers we have ever seen throws away half the value of his work by going too fast, and producing small effects, individually brilliant, so rapidly that his audience has not time fairly to appreciate one before another is presented. The spectator, under such circumstances, takes away with him a mere blurred impression, rather than a clear mental photograph of what he has seen, and the show suffers in his estimation accordingly.

"Another danger attending the non-apparatus school lies in the fact that the performer is apt, by carrying the principle to needless lengths, unduly to limit his methods.

"On the whole we are inclined to think that the most successful magician of the future will be one who judiciously combines apparatus and non-apparatus tricks; such apparatus, however, to be of a simple and homely kind and not made admittedly for the purpose of the trick. The ideal entertainment, from the standpoint of the spectator, will be one in which feats of dexterity or supposed dexterity, are worked in conjunction with brilliant stage effects of a more spectacular kind, such as are exhibited by Mr. Maskelyne at the Egyptian Hall, London."

And so I ring down the curtain on the old-time conjurers. They played their parts in the great drama of life, and enriched the history of the stage with their adventures. What could be more romantic than the career of the incomparable Bosco?

The prestidigitateur makes things appear and disappear to our great wonderment, until finally Death, the greatest of all necromancers, waves his wand, and the mortal fades away from view, amid the shadows of the tomb. Tom Masson, that charming writer of *verse de société*, says—

We are like puppets in some conjurer's hands,  
Who smiling, easy, nonchalantly stands  
And says, amid the universal cheers:  
"You see this man—and now he disappears!"\*

\*Munsey's Magazine, August, 1905.

## THE SECRETS OF SECOND SIGHT.

"Then *second-sighted* Sandy said,  
'We'll do nae good at a', Willie.'"

—*Child's Ballads*, VII. 265.

### I.

I went on one occasion to dine with Mr. Francis J. Martinka, and while waiting for the repast to be served, seated myself upon an old-fashioned sofa in his drawing-room.



ROBERT HELLER'S MAGIC SOFA.

"Pardon me," said my host, gaily, "while I put a bottle of wine on ice. I will be back in a little while. In the meantime, you may amuse yourself looking over these photos of eminent conjurers. And, by the way, you are seated on the very sofa

which Robert Heller used in his second-sight trick. Examine it carefully and you will see where the wires and electric battery were located. I came into possession of the relic after the death of Heller."

So saying he went out to look after the wine.

And so the piece of furniture I was seated on was the veritable up-to-date tripod of that High Priestess of Delphi, Miss Haidie Heller, who assisted Robert Heller, acting the part of clairvoyant. It called up a flood of memories to me.

The magician of the Arabian Nights transported himself from Bagdad to Damascus upon a piece of carpet. In imagination that old sofa carried me back thirty years into the past. I was seated in the gallery of the old National Theatre, Washington, D. C., at a *soirée magique* of the famous Heller. I shall never forget his second-sight trick. It was the most wonder-provoking, the most mysterious experiment I have ever seen. In his hands, it was perfect. Robert Heller saw Houdin give an exhibition of this feat of mental magic in London. His acute mind divined the secret, and he set about devising a code for working the experiment. He added many new effects. Nothing seemed to puzzle him and his assistant.

At an entertainment given in Boston, and described by Henry Hermon in his work on Hellerism, a coin was handed to Heller. He glanced at it and requested Miss Heller to name the object.

"A coin," she quickly answered.

"Here, see if you can tell the name of the country, and all about it?" he next asked.

Without a moment's hesitation she replied: "It is a large copper coin—a coin of Africa, I think. Yes, it is of Tripoli. The inscriptions on it are in Arabic; one side reads 'Coined at Tripoli,' the other side, 'Sultan of two lands, Sultan by inheritance, and the son of a Sultan.'"

"Very well," said Heller, "that is correct. But look, what is the date, now?"

"The date is 1-2-2-0, one thousand two hundred and twenty of the Hegira, or Mohammedan year, which corresponds to 1805 of the Christian year."

Tremendous applause greeted this feat.

Mr. Fred Hunt, who was for a number of years Robert Heller's assistant, revealed the secret of second sight soon after Heller's death. The performer has first to be initiated into a new alphabetical arrangement, which is as follows:

A is H; B is T; C is S; D is G; E is F; F is E; G is A; H is I; I is B; J is L; K is Pray; L is C; M is O; N is D; O is V; P is J; Q is W; R is M; S is N; T is P; U is Look; V is Y; W is R; X is See this; Y is Q; Z is Hurry. "Hurry up" means to repeat the last letter. For example, the initials or name in a ring is wanted. Say it is "Anna." By the alphabetical arrangement H stands for A, D for N. The exclamation "Hurry up" always means a repetition of the last letter, and again H will give the answer when put as follows:

"Here is a name. Do you see it? Hurry up. Have you got it?"

Attention is paid only to the first letter of every sentence, and it will be perceived that the name of Anna is spelled.

After the alphabet we have the numbers, which are arranged as follows: 1 is Say or Speak; 2 is Be, Look or Let; 3 is Can or Can't; 4 is Do or Don't; 5 is Will or Won't; 6 is What; 7 is Please or Pray; 8 is Are or Ain't; 9 is Now; 10 is Tell; 0 is Hurry or Come. "Well" is to repeat the last figure. Now for an example: The number 1,234 is needed. The conjurer remarks: "Say the number. *Look* at it. *Can* you see it? *Do* you know?"

Suppose the number called for is 100.

"*Tell* me the number. *Hurry!*"

So much, dear reader, for the spelling of proper names and conveying numbers to the clairvoyant on the stage. In regard to colors, metals, precious stones, countries, materials, fabrics, makers of watches, playing cards, society emblems, coins, bills, jewelry, wearing apparel, surgical instruments, etc., etc., Heller had them arranged in sets of ten. The first question he asked gave the clue to the set; the second question to the number of the article in the set. Thus but two short questions were necessary to elicit the proper reply from the assistant. *Miscellane-*

ous articles were divided into nineteen sets. I will give examples of two:

## FIRST SET.

*What article is this?*

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. Handkerchief. | 6. Basket.    |
| 2. Neckerchief.  | 7. Beet.      |
| 3. Bag.          | 8. Comforter. |
| 4. Glove.        | 9. Headdress. |
| 5. Purse.        | 10. Fan.      |

## SECOND SET.

*What is this?*

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Watch.     | 6. Necklace. |
| 2. Bracelet.  | 7. Ring.     |
| 3. Guard.     | 8. Rosary.   |
| 4. Chain.     | 9. Cross.    |
| 5. Breastpin. | 10. Charm.   |

Supposing a spectator handed a *Rosary* to the conjurer. He would call out to his assistant, "*What is this?*" (Clue to the second set.) Then he would exclaim, "*Are you ready?*" The word *are* would give the clue to number 8. And so on.

The clues to the sets were worded very nearly alike, so as to make the spectators believe that the same questions were being constantly asked.

Evoking the aid of electricity, Robert Heller was enabled to convey the cue words and numbers of the sets to Miss Heller *without speaking a word*. It was this wonderful effect that so puzzled everybody. A confederate sat among the spectators, near the center aisle of the theatre, and the wires of an electric battery were connected with his chair, the electric push button being under the front part of his seat. Heller gave the cue to the set in which the article was, its number, etc., by some natural movement of his body or arms; and the confederate, rapidly interpreting the secret signals, telegraphed them to the clairvoyant on the stage. The receiving instrument was attached to the sofa upon which Miss Heller sat. The interchangeable use of the two methods of conveying information—spoken and unspoken—during an evening, completely bewildered the spectators. It was indeed a sphinx problem.

Robert Heller, or William Henry Palmer, was born in Canterbury, England, in 1833. At the age of fourteen he won a scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music. In the year 1852

he made his début in New York City at the Chinese Assembly Rooms. On this occasion he wore a black wig and spoke with a Gallic accent, believing that a French conjurer would be better received in this country than an English magician. He failed to make a success, and eventually drifted to Washington,



ROBERT HELLER.

where he taught music for a number of years. All this time he was perfecting himself in legerdemain. Finally he reappeared in New York and won unbounded success. He visited Europe and India, returning to the United States in 1875. His last performance was given at Concert Hall, Philadelphia, on November 25, 1878. He died in the same city on November 28, 1878. Soon after his death an absurd story went the rounds of the



press that he had directed his executors to destroy his automata and magical paraphernalia. Such is not the case. Mr. Francis J. Martinka, of New York, possesses a number of his tricks. Heller was a magnificent pianist and always gave a short recital of his own compositions and those of the masters during his entertainment. He used to append the following effusion to his posters:

"Shakespeare wrote well;  
Dickens wrote *Heller*;  
Anderson was—  
But the greatest is Heller."

The following is one of Heller's programmes (Salt Lake City, Utah, May 23, 1867):

FOURTH PERFORMANCE OF THE RENOWNED  
CONJURER, ILLUSIONIST AND PIANIST  
MR. ROBERT

# HELLER!

The selections of  
**WONDERS AND MARVELS!**  
For these performances will embrace many of his  
Most Famous Inventions in Magical Art!  
**THE MUSICAL SELECTIONS**  
Will be rendered upon Chickering's Grand  
Piano, attached to the Theatre.

**MR. ROBERT HELLER**  
Will make his FOURTH Appearance

## THIS EVENING

### PART I.—ILLUSORY.

- 1.—WITH A CANDLE.
- 2.—WITH A WATCH—The Watches of the Audience  
made to strike the hour.
- 3.—THE CANNON BALLS.
- 4.—WITH 30 PIECES OF SILVER.
- 5.—MOCHA—an utter impossibility.
- 6.—A PHOTOGRAPH.

### PART II.—MUSIC.

- 1.—Caprice on Airs from "Il Trovatore," including  
the famous Anvil Chorus.—HELLER.
- 2.—"Home, Sweet Home."—HELLER.
- 3.—"Storm and Sunshine"—a musical story.

### PART III.—THE GREAT MYSTERY OF

**SECOND SIGHT!**  
The Most Startling Phenomenon of this Country.

### PART IV.—FUN.

Heller's Original and Wonderful Band of  
**WOOD MINSTRELS**  
The most perfect set of Blockheads in the world,  
who will introduce their most popular  
Overtures, Choruses, &c.

## II.

A curious exhibition of silent second sight was that of the Svengali trio. The effect as described by the *New York Herald*, August 11, 1904, is as follows:

"Two persons (lady and gentleman) are on the stage, both with their backs toward the audience. A third one goes into the auditorium, with his back towards the stage, to receive the wishes of the audience. If the name of any international celebrity is whispered to him, with lightning rapidity the thought is transmitted. The gentleman on the stage turns round immediately and appears in features, bearing and dress as the desired personage—with wonderfully startling resemblance.

"One can likewise whisper to the gentleman in the auditorium the name of an international opera, operetta or international song. The thought flies like lightning, and the lady sings what is wanted, instantly accompanying herself on the piano.

"The secret of this trick is as follows: When the curtain rises, the master of ceremonies walks to the front of the stage and in a pleasing voice begins: 'Ladies and gentlemen—I have the pleasure of introducing to you, etc., etc. I will call your attention to the fact that the spectators must confine their whispered wishes to international celebrities, names of well-known personages, songs and operas of international fame,' etc.

"This limitation of choice is the key to the performance. They have lists of these 'international celebrities,' rulers, statesmen, diplomats, great writers and musical composers; songs of world-wide reputation, popular selections from the operas, etc. And the secret of the evening is that all of these carefully selected names, titles, etc., are numbered, as in the following examples:

## STATESMEN AND RULERS.

1. Bismarck.
2. King Humbert of Italy.
3. Napoleon Bonaparte.
4. King Edward VII.
5. Paul Kruger.
120. Lincoln.

## POPULAR SONGS.

1. "Home, Sweet Home."
2. "Last Rose of Summer."
3. "Marseillaise."
4. "The Jewel Song in Faust."
5. "Walter's Prize Song."
101. "Comin' Thro' the Rye."

## OPERAS.

1. "Faust."
2. "Lohengrin."
3. "Bohemian Girl."
4. "Lucia di Lammermoor."
5. "Carmen."
120. "Trovatore."

## GREAT WRITERS.

1. Thackeray.
2. Victor Hugo.
3. Dickens.
4. George Eliot.
5. Shakespeare.
101. Dante.

## HOW THE SIGNALS ARE CONCEALED.

"The manager reiterates that if only names of international reputation are given the responses will be correct nine hundred and ninety-nine times in a thousand. Then he descends from the stage, and, smiling right and left, inclines his ear to catch the whispered wishes as he moves slowly up the aisle, generally with his back to the stage. An auditor whispers to him, 'Bismarck.'

"Herr Svengali, gesticulating freely but naturally, pressing his eyes with his fingers for an instant as if going into a momentary trance—only a second or two, just enough to impress the audience—then thrusts a hand into the air, wipes the moisture from his face with his handkerchief or leans toward a spectator, seeking his attention, when a voice from the stage says, 'Bismarck.'

"'Right,' responds the man who whispered that illustrious name. Then there is a craning of necks and crushing of programmes, all eyes fixed on the stage, where the impersonator, standing before a cabinet of costume pigeonholes, with the aid of an assistant has donned wig and uniform in his lightning change and whirls around disguised as Bismarck, while the girl at the piano plays 'The Watch on the Rhine.' It is all the work of a few seconds and makes a great impression upon the spectator.

"The next man calls for an opera air, 'Bohemian Girl,' and the piano plays 'I Dreamt That I Dwelt in Marble Halls,' etc. Another man suggests the magic name 'Sheridan.' It is echoed aloud from the stage, while the audience applauds and the girl plays 'The Star Spangled Banner.'

"The few experts present pay little attention to the stage. Their eyes are fixed on the man Svengali in the aisle, noting every move he makes. It is observed that his numerous gestures, his frequent use of his handkerchief, the pressure of his

fingers on his eyes, as if to hypnotize his assistant on the stage, are natural movements, attracting no attention, yet necessary to hide the vital signals in the cipher code of the show.

"In the programme and show bills it is emphasized that the lady and gentleman on the stage have their backs to the audience, while Svengali, down in the aisle, has his back to the stage, making collusion apparently impossible. This makes a profound impression on the public.

"A CONFEDERATE BEHIND A SCREEN.

"But not a word is said of that curious screen panel, bearing a double-headed eagle—the Austrian coat of arms—surmounting a large cabinet of costumes occupying so much space on the stage. The programme does not explain that this screen panel is transparent from behind and that an accomplice with a strong magnifying lens reads every move made by Svengali and repeats his signals to the pretty girl at the piano and the impersonator at the cabinet.

"THE SYSTEMS EXPLAINED.

"Here is an illustration of how the figure system can be worked. As explained above, the famous personages, popular songs and operas are on numbered lists. Svengali in the aisle, with his code of signals, has all these numbers committed to memory.

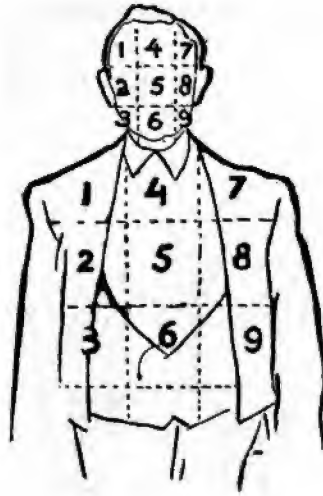
"When a spectator whispers 'Dickens' Svengali knows it is No. 4, and he signals accordingly.

"But how?

"By touching his head, chin, or breast, or that particular part of his body designated in the signal code of the Svengali Company. The diagram given herewith illustrates the system of communication by numbers, nine figures and a cipher (o), by which all the wealth of the world may be measured, and any number of words may be communicated without a word of speech. One has but to map out a square on his face, breast or  
 1. and number it with these nine figures, with an extra space  
 pher, to be ready for the Svengali business. That is,  
 is memorized the names and the numbers representing

"Say the human head is used for this purpose. Imagine the top of the head, right hand side, as No. 1, the right ear as No. 2, the jaw as No. 3, and the neck as the cipher; the forehead No. 4, the nose No. 5, the chin No. 6, the top of the head on the left side as No. 7, the left ear No. 8, and the left side of the jaw No. 9.

"Thus you have the code system by which operators can communicate volumes by using a codified list of numbered words or sentences.



"If you label the Lord's Prayer No. 4, and the Declaration of Independence No. 5, you may instantly telegraph the mighty literature through wireless space—enough literature to save all Europe from anarchy—by two natural movements of the hand.

"You can label your eyes, your movements or even your glances, making them take the places of the nine omnipotent numbers. Again: Glance upward to the right for No. 1, straight upward for No. 2, and upward to the left for No. 3. Repeating, glancing horizontally for Nos. 4, 5 and 6. Repeating the same again, by glancing downward for Nos. 7, 8 and 9, and stroking your chin for the cipher (0).

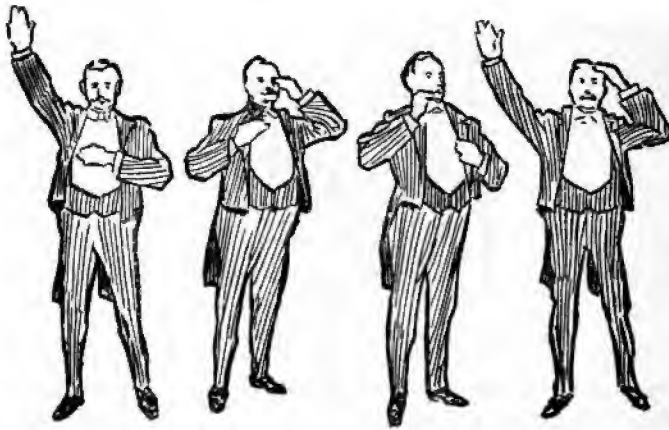
"With your back to the audience, you can telegraph in a similar way, using your arm and elbow to make the necessary signals. Let the right arm, hanging down, represent No. 1; the elbow, projecting from the side, No. 2; elbow raised, No. 3. Repeat

with the left arm for Nos. 4, 5 and 6; with either hand placed naturally behind you, on the small of the back, above the belt and over your shoulder for Nos. 7, 8 and 9, and on the back of your head or neck for the cipher (o)."

### III.

It is an interesting fact to note that the Chevalier Pinetti was the first exhibitor of the second-sight trick. Houdin revived (or re-invented) it.

On the 12th of December, 1846, he announced in his bill. "In this programme, M. Robert-Houdin's son, who is gifted with



SECOND-SIGHT TRICK.—SIGNALING.

marvelous second sight, after his eyes have been covered with a thick bandage, will designate every object presented to him by the audience." In his memoirs he thus describes how he came to invent the trick:

"My two children were playing one day in the drawing-room at a game they had invented for their own amusement. The younger had bandaged his elder brother's eyes, and made him guess at the objects he touched, and when the latter happened to guess right, they changed places. This simple game suggested to me the most complicated idea that ever crossed my mind.

"Pursued by the notion, I ran and shut myself up in my work-room, and was fortunately in that happy state when the mind

follows easily the combinations traced by fancy. I rested my head in my hands, and, in my excitement, laid down the first principles of second sight."

Houdin never revealed his method of working the trick.

Robert Heller's successors in mental magic are Max Berol and wife, and the Zancigs. Among other feats Berol is able to memorize over two hundred words called out by the spectators and written down on a slip of paper by some gentleman. Berol will then write these words backwards and forwards without hesitation and name any one of them by its number in the list. The Zancigs are marvels in the art of second sight. They were born in Copenhagen, Denmark, but are naturalized citizens of the United States. Clever advertisers, they lay claim to occult powers, as the following notice in the Washington Post, April 30, 1905, will testify:

"Although Prof. Zancig and Mme. Zancig, who will be at Chase's this week, are naturalized Americans, they come from Denmark. They first developed their transmission of thought from one mind to another—or what is known as telepathy—while journeying through the Orient. They found that quite a number of the Orientals had found it possible to control 'thought waves' and transmit them to the minds of others, just as Marconi, with his wireless telegraphy, controls electric waves and transmits them to an objective point. Prof. Zancig discovered that Mme. Zancig was inceptive, and he could readily transmit to her mind the thoughts of his own. The tests were continued, and became so positive and conclusive that it was decided to give public exhibitions.

"While in India, Prof. and Mme. Zancig saw some astonishing telepathic exhibitions, which encouraged them to still greater efforts. They gave exhibitions before the Maharajah, near Delhi; before the Chinese minister at Hongkong, and before the Japanese officials of highest grades, who took great interest in the mental tests. One remarkable incident occurred at Potchefstroom, South Africa, where the natives are extremely superstitious. The exhibition had been extensively advertised, and the house was full. The entertainment created a sensation. As long as Prof. Zancig remained on the stage everything was all right,

but when he went among the audience and read dates of coins, inscriptions on letters, and performed other remarkable feats, the audience suddenly became panic-stricken, and there was a mad rush for windows, doors, or any other means of exit. In five minutes the hall was empty, and nothing could induce the people to return. After concluding his tour abroad, Prof. Zancig and his wife returned to America, and began an American tour which has been uninterruptedly successful and will extend to every section of the United States."

Two clever performers of the second-sight trick are Harry and Mildred Rouclere. Mr. Rouclere gives a very pleasing magical entertainment.



## THE CONFESSIONS OF AN AMATEUR CONJURER.

"If this be magic, let it be an art."—SHAKESPEARE.

### I.

At the theatre not long ago, I heard the orchestra play Mendelssohn's exquisite "Spring Song," and immediately I was carried back in fancy to my boyhood days under the old roof-tree at Glen Willow, on the heights of Georgetown, D. C., where I spent such happy years. The rain is gently pattering upon the shingled roof; the distant woods are waxing green under the soft influences of the season; the blackbirds are calling in the tree tops. O sweet springtide of youth, made more beautiful still by the associations of books, by the free play of the imagination in realms of poetry and fantasie—

"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

The intervening years are all blotted out. I am young again, and have just returned to the old home, after witnessing an exhibition of magic by Wyman the Wizard at the town hall. To a boy fresh from the delights of the Arabian Nights this is a wonderful treat. My mind is agitated with a thousand thoughts. I, too, will become a conjurer, and hold the groundlings spell-bound; bring bowls of goldfish from a shawl; cook puddings in a borrowed hat; pull rabbits from old gentlemen's pockets.

Dear old Wyman, ventriloquist as well as prestidigitateur, old-time showman, and the delight of my boyhood—what a weary pilgrimage you had of it in this world; wandering up and down, never at rest, traveling thousands of miles by stagecoach, steamboat, and railroad, giving entertainments in little villages

and towns all over the United States, and welcomed everywhere by happy children. The big cities you left to your more ambitious brethren. But what of that? You brought thereby more pleasure into humble lives than all of the old conjurers put together. Well have you earned your rest. Though your name is quite forgotten by the present generation, a few old boys and girls still hold you in loving remembrance.

Wyman was born in Albany, N. Y., and was reported to be sixty-five years of age at the time of his death. Just when he



WYMAN, THE MAGICIAN.  
(From an Old Print, Ellison Collection.)

went on the stage, I have been unable to ascertain. Mr. George Wood, who is now running a small curio shop on Filbert Street, Philadelphia, was for sixteen years Wyman's manager. He afterwards went with Pharazyn and Frederick Eugene Powell. Thanks to my friend, Mr. C. S. Eby, who interviewed Mr. Wood during the summer of 1905, I have obtained a few facts concerning Wyman's career. After giving exhibitions all over the United States in school houses and small halls, Wyman went abroad and brought back with him quite an outfit of apparatus, most of it purchased, I presume, from Voisin's Repository in

Paris. Voisin was the only manufacturer of magical novelties in those days. About 1850 Wyman played in New York City under the management of P. T. Barnum. When the magician Anderson sold out, Wyman bought considerable of his paraphernalia, such as the "Magic Cauldron" (Phillippe's old trick), the "Nest of Boxes," "Aerial Suspension," "Inexhaustible Bottle," and "Gun Trick." In 1867 Wyman started the "gift show" in connection with his magic entertainment, sometimes giving away building lots as a first prize. He introduced the Sphinx illusion in the South for the first time and made a tremendous hit. People would come twenty miles to see it. He had a wonderful memory, which he applied to a second-sight act. The articles were placed in a handkerchief by the boy who borrowed them and the professor managed to get one secret look at the collection. From his remembrance he would later describe the articles while they were held aloft still tied in the handkerchief. Another favorite illusion was the borrowing of a watch, which was pounded and afterwards found under one of the spectators (not a confederate). It was one of the duties of Wood to slip the borrowed watch in place while ostensibly selling magic books.

Wyman retired from the stage eventually, and lived in Philadelphia for several years at 612 North Eleventh Street. Afterwards he moved to Burlington, New Jersey, where he bought an imposing country place. He owned considerable real estate. He died July 31, 1881. A few days before his death he called to see his old friend Thomas W. Yost, the manufacturer of magical apparatus, of Philadelphia. He must have had a premonition of his demise, for he remarked to Mr. Yost, as he left the store: "You will not see me again. This is the last of Wyman." In a few days he was dead. He was buried at Fall River, Massachusetts, the home of his wife. Wyman's show consisted of ventriloquism, magic, and an exhibition of Italian *fantochini* (puppets). He was one of the best entertainers of his day.

## II.

I took to magic at an early age—not the magic of the sleight of hand artist, however, but the real goetic or black magic,

as black as any old grimoire of mediæval days could make it. Aye, darker in hue than any inveighed against in the famous *Dæmonologie* of King James I. of Protestant memory. I believed firmly in witches, ghosts, goblins, voodoo spells, and conjure doctors. But what can you expect of a small boy surrounded by negro servants, the relics of the old régime of slavery, who still held tenaciously to the devil-lore of their ancestors of the African jungle? At nightfall I dared not go near the smoke-house for fear of the witches who held their revels there. One day my father brought home a book for his library. It was Mackey's *Extraordinary Popular Delusions; or, The Madness of Crowds*. That work of absorbing interest opened my eyes to the unreality of the old superstitions. I read it with avidity. It became a sort of Bible to me. It lies on the table before me, as I pen these lines; a much-thumbed, faded, old book.

The first amateur sleight of hand show I ever took part in, was given by a boy named Albert Niblack. The *matinée magique* was held in a stable attached to my father's house. The entrance fee was three pins, orchestra chairs ten pins. The stage was erected in the carriage house, and the curtain consisted of a couple of sheets surreptitiously borrowed from the household linen closet. I acted as the conjurer's assistant. The success of the entertainment was phenomenal. The audience consisted of some thirty children, with a sprinkling of negro nurses who came to preserve order among the smaller fry, and an old horse who persisted in sticking his head through a window near the stage, his stall being in an adjoining compartment. He occupied the only private box in the theatre. Among other tricks on the programme, young Niblack produced a small canary bird from an egg which had been previously examined and declared to be the real product of the hen by all the colored experts present, who tested it on their teeth. One fat old mammy, with her head picturesquely done up in a red bandana handkerchief, was so overcome by the trick that she shouted out: "Fo de Lawd sake! Dat boy mus' be kin to de Debbil sho," and regretted the fact that she did not have a rabbit's foot with her, to ward off the spells. Years have passed since then. Young Niblack is now Lieut. Commander Niblack, U. S. N., erstwhile naval att

of the American embassy at Berlin, etc. I wonder if he still practises magic. He obtained his insight into the mysteries of conjuring from a little book of sleights, puzzles and chemical experiments, a cheap affair and very crude. Like Houdin, he had to create the principles of legerdemain himself, for the book contained no real information on the subject. It was manufactured to *sell* in two senses of the word, and to the best of my belief, was purchased at the circus. Among that audience were several children who have since become famous, to a greater or less extent. There was Umei Tsuda, a diminutive Japanese girl, sent to this country to be educated, and who now presides over a great normal school in Japan; Waldemar Bodisco (son of Count Bodisco, the Russian Minister to the United States), now an officer in the Czar's navy; and, if I mistake not, Agustin de Iturbide, the adopted son of the ill-fated Maximilian, who attempted to found an empire in Mexico, bolstered up by French bayonets. Young Iturbide's mother, after the tragic death of Maximilian, came to Georgetown to reside and educate her son, the heir to the throne of Mexico. Poor fellow, he was a prince, but he did not plume himself because of the fact, for he was in reality a "boy without a country." We were classmates in the preparatory department of Georgetown College. His career is one of the romances of history. He is now living an exile in an old country house in the District of Columbia, where he spends his time reading and dreaming.

### III.

I entered upon the practise of sleight of hand in the year 1877, after reading Hoffmann's *Modern Magic*. I adopted Houdin's method of carrying a pack of cards and other articles in my pockets. On my way to school, over a long country road, I put in some hard practise, learning to *sauter le coupe*, and palm most any small object. While in class one day, I was caught *in flagrante delicto*, with a pack of cards in my hand, by the dignified old Latin professor. I was sent to the Principal of the Academy for punishment, which I received like a stoic, but vowing vengeance on the Latin pedagogue, who was a very

orthodox religionist, the principal of a Baptist Sunday school, and consequently held cards in abhorrence. I often heard him remark that cards were the "Devil's Looking Glasses." One day, I slipped a couple of packs of cards in the sleeve of the professor's overcoat, which hung upon the wall back of his desk, and tipped the wink to the boys. They were astounded at my audacity. When the class was dismissed, the scholars lingered around to see the fun. The professor went to put on his coat, whereupon the cards flew about the room in a shower, being propelled by the impact of his arm, which he thrust violently



GLEN WILLOW, GEORGETOWN, D. C.

into the sleeve. The boys, with a great shout, began picking up the scattered pasteboards, which they presented to the teacher, commiserating with him in his trouble. The old man, who was very angry, disclaimed ownership of the detested cards, and got out of the room as speedily as possible. Perhaps it is needless to remark that I failed miserably in the Latin examinations that year. But it may have been owing to my stupidity and not to any animus on the professor's part. Let us hope so.

After long practise in legerdemain, I determined to give an entertainment, and selected as my assistant, my school chum, Edward L. Dent, a boy who possessed great mechanical genius. Later in life he graduated with honors as a mechanical engineer

from Stevens' Institute, New Jersey, and founded a great iron mill in Georgetown. Poor fellow, he met with business reverses and lost a fortune. He died some five or six years ago. Young Dent lived in a historical mansion on the heights of Georgetown, surrounded by a great park of oaks. It was the home of John C. Calhoun, when he was Secretary of State of the United States. In the great attic of the house, Judge Dent had fitted up a superb carpenter shop and forge for his son.

Here my chum and I manufactured our apparatus: the Washerwoman's Bottle, the Nest of Boxes *à la* Kellar; the Card Star; the Coffee and Milk Vases; the Sphinx Table, etc. When all was ready, about two hundred invitations were sent out for a *Soirée Magique*. The great drawing-room of the house was fitted up as a theatre, with a stage at one end and drop curtain. We fenced in the stage with rich draperies, after the style of Robert Heller, and our gilded tables and silver candelabra with wax tapers looked very fine against the crimson background. It was the most elaborate amateur show I ever saw. Twenty minutes before the curtain rang up, both magician and assistant were seized with stage fright. We had peeped through a hole in the curtain and taken in the sea of faces. We dared not confront that crowd of youngsters without a mask of some kind. Happy thought! We decided to blacken our faces with burnt cork and appear as negro necromancers. The performance went off very well indeed, until we came to the "Card Star." O fatal Pentagram of Pythagoras! The cards were chosen from a pack and rammed down the mouth of a big pistol, preparatory to firing them at the star, on the points of which they were to appear. I began my patter, facing the audience. "Ladies and gentlemen, I will give you an exhibition of magic marksmanship. I will fire this pistol (laughter) at the star on yonder table (renewed laughter), and the cards"—(ironical cat calls). I turned around, and to my horror, the duplicate cards were already sticking to the star; my assistant had let off the apparatus too soon. The curtain fell. I shed tears of rage at the fiasco. But, later on, I learned to act more philosophically. Magicians are subject to these mistakes. I have seen Alexander Herrmann's



calculations all upset by comical contretemps of like character to the above, but he smiled benignantly and went right along as unconcernedly as ever. Conjuring certainly gets on the nerves of its devotees.

#### IV.

Amateur magicians are called upon to exhibit their skill in all sorts of places. I once gave a performance in a Pullman car, going at full speed. It was on the occasion of a pilgrimage to the Scottish Rite temples of the Southwest, with a party of eminent members of the fraternity. This was in the spring of 1904. Among those who went on the journey were the Hon. James Daniel Richardson, 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Southern jurisdiction of the United States, and Admiral Winfield Scott Schley, 32°, the "hero of Santiago," a most genial traveling companion and raconteur. Mr. Richardson had jocularly appointed me Hierophant of the Mysteries, so I took along with me a box full of magic apparatus, to amuse the Initiates when time hung heavy on their hands. My first performance was given while speeding across the State of Kentucky. At one end of an observation car I arranged my table and paraphernalia. In honor of the Admiral, I got up an impromptu trick, which I called, "After the Battle of Santiago." Borrowing a silk hat, and showing it empty, I began as follows:

"Gentlemen, stretch your imaginations, like Jules Verne, and let this hat represent the cruiser Brooklyn, Admiral Schley's ship. This oscillating Pullman car is the ocean. The great battle of Santiago is over. Victory has crowned the American arms. An order comes from the flagship to decorate the vessels of the fleet with bunting. The sailors of the Brooklyn dive down into the hold and bring up a variety of flags. (Here I produced from the hat the flags of all nations.) They are not satisfactory. Roll them together, says the commander, and see what the composition will make. (I rolled the flags into a bundle, which I proceeded to throw in the air, whereupon a big silk American flag appeared, the smaller ensigns having disappeared.) Ah, the Star



Spangled Banner, under whose folds the men of many nations live in amity as fellow citizens."

I waved the flag in the air, amid the plaudits of the spectators. Just then the car gave a terrific lurch, while rounding a curve; I lost my balance and was precipitated head first like a battering ram against the capacious stomach of an old gentleman, seated in the front row. He doubled up with pain.

"Say, what kind of a trick do you call that?" he gasped out.

"That," said I, "is a representation of a sailor on board of the Brooklyn falling overboard."

"I call it a monkey trick," he groaned. His dignity and digestive apparatus had been sadly upset. From that time on, he eyed me with suspicion whenever I gave a show, and always took a chair in the back row of seats.

"Speaking of monkey tricks," said Admiral Schley, "reminds me of an incident that occurred when I was a midshipman on board of the steam frigate Niagara, in 1860. A monkey was the prestidigitateur. We were conveying back to their native land the Japanese embassy that had visited the United States in return for the visit made to their country by Commodore Perry some years before. One of the embassy bought a monkey at Anger Point, Africa, during a stoppage at that place. He (the monkey, not the Ambassador) proved to be a most mischievous brute, and was continually picking and stealing eatables from the cook's galley. Worse than that, so far as the sailors were concerned, the 'missing link' of Darwin took a special delight in upsetting pots and pans of grease on the deck, which the seamen had to clean up. When chased by some irate Jack Tar with a rope's end, the monkey would take refuge in the rigging, where he would hang by his tail from a spar, and grin with delight at his enemies. We all hated the beast, but respect for our Japanese guests forbade revenge. Finally an old sailor caught the monkey and greased his tail. Soon after, the simian committed one of his daily depredations and hied himself, as usual, up the rigging, where he attempted to swing from a yardarm by his greased tail. But, alas, he fell overboard and was drowned. The verdict rendered was that he had committed suicide. His only mourners were the Mikado's ambassadors."

## V.

The study of natural magic is wonderfully fascinating. It possesses, too, a decided pedagogic value, which eminent scholars have not been slow to recognize. Those who obtain an insight into its principles are preserved against infection from the many psychical epidemics of the age. The subject is of interest to scientists. Dr. G. Stanley Hall, at one time professor of experimental psychology at the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md., at present president of Clarke University, Worcester, Massachusetts, used to exhibit conjuring tricks to his classes, to illustrate the illusions of the senses. An eminent German scientist, Dr. Max Dessoir, has written learnedly on the psychology of legerdemain. Prof. Joseph Jastrow, of the University of Wisconsin, subjected the conjurers, Herrmann and Kellar, to a series of careful tests, to ascertain their "tactile sensibility, sensitiveness to textures, accuracy of visual perception, quickness of movement, mental processes," etc. The results of these tests were printed in *Science*, Vol. III, page 685-689, under the title of "Psychological Notes upon Sleight-of-hand Experts."

The literature of natural magic is not extensive. Thirty years ago, first-class works in English on legerdemain were rare. Houdin's *Secrets de la Prestidigitation et de la Magie*, which was published in 1868, was out of print, and, says Prof. Hoffmann, "the possession of a copy was regarded among professors of magic as a boon of the highest possible value." Hoffmann picked up an old second-hand copy of the work in Paris, and translated it in the year 1877. To-day, books on sleight of hand have been multiplying rapidly. Every professor of the art thinks it incumbent upon him to publish a treatise on magic. Strange to say, the good works on the subject have been written by amateurs. Prof. Hoffmann (Angelo Lewis), a member of the London bar, has written the best book, following him have come Edwin Sachs and C. Lang Neill. The autobiography of that arch-master of magic, Robert-Houdin, was translated, in 1859, by Dr. R. Shelton Mackenzie, of Philadelphia. Thomas Frost, in 1881, produced an interesting work on the *Lives of the Conjurers*, but it is now quite out of date. I know of no really scholarly treatise extant to-day on the history of prestidigitation.

I have been very fortunate in my researches in the history of magic, to have had access to several private collections of books, old playbills, programmes, prints, etc., relating to the subject. I myself have been an indefatigable collector of books and



WANDS OF FAMOUS MAGICIANS.  
(From the Ellison Collection, New York.)

pamphlets treating of magic and magicians. But my library pales into insignificance beside that of my friend, Dr. Saram R. Ellison, of New York City. Ellison is a practising physician and, like a great lover of escamotage. He has

in his collection of books, many rare volumes picked up in Europe and elsewhere. At the present writing his library contains nearly one thousand two hundred titles, among them being rare copies of Decremps (1789-1793), Pinetti (1785), Breslaw (1812), Porta (1658), Kosmann (1817), Witgeest (1773), Naudeus (1657), etc., etc. In the year 1902, Kellar visited the Ellison library. He endeavored to purchase the collection for \$2,000. Dr. Ellison refused to part with his beloved books. In his will he has left the collection to Columbia University, New York City. One of the doctor's fads is the collection of wands of famous magicians. He possesses over sixty rods of the modern magi, and has often contemplated sending an expedition to Egypt to discover the wands used by Moses and Aaron. Among his collection are wands formerly wielded by Carl, Leon, Alexander and Mme. Herrmann (four representatives of one family), Willmann, Anderson, Blitz, de Kolta, Hoffmann, Goldin, Maskelyne, Powell, McAllister, Robinson, Kellar, Fox, etc. Each of the wands is accompanied by a story, which will be published in the near future.

## VI.

When the citizen-king, Louis Philippe, ruled over the destinies of *la belle France*, there resided in Paris an old man, by the name of M. Roujol, familiarly known among his confrères as "Father" Roujol. He kept a modest shop in the Rue Richelieu for the manufacture and sale of magical apparatus. The professional and amateur conjurers of the French capital made Roujol's their meeting place. "The Duc de M——," says Robert-Houdin, "did not disdain to visit the humble emporium of the mystic art, and remain for hours conversing with Roujol and his associates." It was here that Houdin became acquainted with Jules de Rovère, of noble birth, a conjurer who abandoned the title of *escamoteur*, as beneath his aristocratic dignity, and coined for himself the pompous cognomen, *prestidigitateur*, from *presti digiti* (activity of the fingers). The French Academy sanctioned the formation of this word, thus handing it down to posterity. Jules de Rovère also called himself *Physicien du Roi*. Old Father Roujol is dust long ago. We have replicas of his

quaint place in New York, Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia. On Sixth Avenue, not far from Thirtieth Street, New York City, is the shop of the Martinka Brothers. It is located on the ground floor of a dingy old building. In front is a tiny window, with a variety of magical apparatus displayed therein. Above the door, in tarnished gold letters, is the sign, "Palace of Magic." The second floor is occupied by a Chinese restaurant. The Occident and Orient exist here cheek-by-jowl. The Chinaman concocts mysterious dishes to tickle the jaded palates of the *boule-*



BIJOU THEATRE OF THE MARTINKA BROS., NEW YORK.

*vandiers*; the proprietors of the Aladdin Palace of Up-to-Date Enchantments invent ingenious tricks and illusions to astound the eyes of their patrons. Here I met Robinson, de Kolta, Kellar, and many other conjurers of note. The Society of American Magicians holds its meetings at Martinka's.

This society owes its foundation to two practising physicians of New York, Dr. W. Golden Mortimer, an ex-conjurer, and Dr. Saram R. Ellison, the collector of magic literature. Ellison suggested the name, Mortimer wrote the ritual of the order, and

the two of them called the meeting for the formation of the society. The first idea of such a fraternity of magicians was formulated by the writer of this book, who endeavored to found a society called the "Sphinx," but it proved abortive. The leading conjurers of the United States and Europe are enrolled among the members of the S. A. M. The meetings are held once a month, at Martinka's, usually followed by exhibitions of skill on the stage of the Bijou Theatre, attached to the place. Robert-Houdin, in the closing chapter of his *Secrets of Conjuring and Magic*, remarks that it would be a superb sight to witness a performance by magicians, where each would show his *chef d'oeuvre* in the art. At Martinka's this is realized. Here you may see the very perfection of digital dexterity, mental magic, and the like. Mr. Francis J. Martinka possesses many interesting relics of celebrated performers: Alexander Herrmann's wand, Robert Heller's orange tree, and photographs galore of magicians, living and dead. Some of the most important illusions of the day have been built in the shop of the Martinka Brothers. Other manufacturers in New York City are Witmark & Sons, and Mr. Beadle, a veteran mechanic and erstwhile assistant to Robert Heller.

In Boston we have the magic emporiums of W. D. LeRoy and C. Milton Chase; and in Chicago, that of A. Roterberg. Both LeRoy and Roterberg are fine sleight-of-hand performers. Mr. Roterberg is the author of a clever work on card conjuring, which ranks very high in the estimation of the profession, also several little brochures on up-to-date legerdemain. In Philadelphia, Mr. Thomas Yost, a veteran manufacturer of magical apparatus, holds forth. He has built many fine illusions and tricks. In London, we have the well-known firm of Hamley & Co.; in Paris, Caroly and De Vere. There is no dearth of periodicals devoted to the art of magic. Among the leading ones are: *Mahatma*, Brooklyn, New York; *The Sphinx*, Kansas City, Missouri; *Magic* and *The Wizard*, London; *The Magician*, Liverpool; *L'Illusioniste*, Paris; and *Der Zauberspiegel*, Berlin.

## A DAY WITH ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

"Come, bring thy wand, whose magic power  
Can wake the troubled spirits of the deep."

HEMANS: *Address to Fancy.*

### I.

They come back to me, those old days in the newspaper office in Baltimore. I can shut my eyes and see the long, dingy room with its ink-splattered tables and flaring gas jets. The printers' devils rushing in and out with wet proof-sheets. Reporters come and go. Look! There is Joe Kelly, Lefevre, Jarrett and John Monroe. And here comes Ludlam, familiarly known as "Lud," the prince of Bohemian newsgatherers; a cross between Dickens' Alfred Jingle and Murger's Rodolph. He is always "down on his luck," but nothing can phase his natural gaiety and bonhomie. He snaps his fingers at Fate, and mocks at the world. On his death bed he made bon mots. Poor old Ludlam, he is forever associated with my introduction to Alexander the Great.

I look back across the years that separate me from my journalistic experiences, and see myself seated at a reporter's table, on a certain morning in January, waiting for an assignment from the city editor; a fire, a murder, political interview, I knew not what, and therein lies the ineffable charm of newspaper reporting. Enter Ludlam, jaunty and debonaire. The snow encrusts his faded coat with powdery flakes. He strikes a theatrical attitude, and exclaims: "Philosophers say that the Devil is dead! Gentlemen, don't you believe them. I have just had an interview with His Satanic Majesty, and he is very much alive. He was beautifully perfumed with sulphur (or was it cigarette smoke?); and wore a fur-lined overcoat. Coming from a tropical climate,



he finds this cold weather very disagreeable. He turned my watch into a turnip and back again. He took a roll of greenbacks from my coat pocket. That was sure enough witchcraft. I defy any other person than Beelzebub to get money from *my* clothes. He extracted a hard-boiled egg from my nose, and a rabbit from my hat. But seeing is believing. Here he is now!"

With that he threw open the green baize door with a crash, and in walked Alexander Herrmann, the magician, smiling and



ALEXANDER HERRMANN.

bowing. This little comedy had been arranged by the irrepressible Ludlam. He was a great practical joker. We shouted with laughter. This was my first introduction to Alexander the Great, who was making his periodical visit to the newspaper offices, and he came to the *News* first, because it was an afternoon journal. He was to play that night at Ford's Opera House. He performed a number of capital tricks for us with watches, coins, handkerchiefs and rings, and was pronounced a royal good fellow by the entire outfit—editors, reporters, typesetters and devils. Being the only amateur magician on the paper, I was detailed to accompany the famous conjurer on his "swing around the



magic circle." I was delighted with my assignment. We traversed the markets; visited the Stock Exchange, where a howling mob of brokers danced a carmagnole about us; and the police stations. Herrmann was received everywhere with acclamations. His impromptu feats of magic evoked shouts of laughter. On one of the street cars the following scene took place, which I hugely enjoyed:

The conductor, a cadaverous, solemn looking man, who took the world and himself seriously, came around to collect the fares. He accosted the conjurer first.

"Fare," exclaimed Herrmann, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders. "Why, I paid mine long ago."

"No such thing!" snapped the conductor.

"But, my dear fellow—!"

"You can't come that game on me!" said the conductor. "I demand your fare, at once, or off you go."

"Nonsense, man, I gave you a five-dollar gold piece, but you did not return the change. You said, 'Wait until'—. But here is the gold coin sticking in your scarf." So saying, the conjurer proceeded to extract a coin from the muffler which the conductor wore about his neck. "And worse than that, you've robbed me." Then seizing hold of the coat of the dumbfounded man, he took from his breast pocket a large bundle of what seemed to be greenbacks. These, Herrmann scattered about the car. On each note was printed his portrait and an advertisement of his show. At a trifling distance these advertisements resembled greenbacks. They were more or less facsimiles of U. S. Treasury certificates. The occupants of the car picked them up, and laughed heartily at the mystification. Herrmann then paid his fare, presented the conductor and driver with passes to the theater, and in a little while we got off at Barnum's hotel, where we had luncheon. The negro waiters of the establishment eyed him with fear and trembling, for he had played many practical jokes on them, and they never knew when he would break out in a new spot. He had a capital trick of raising a glass of wine to his lips as if about to partake of it, when with a dash of the hand upwards the glass would vanish, wine and all, only to be reproduced a minute later from somebody's coat tail.

## II.

The following is a charming anecdote related by Herrmann in the *North American Review*, some years ago :

"In March, 1885, while in Madrid, I appeared at the Sasuella Theatre quite successfully, for the house was filled every evening with hidalgos and noble senoras, and King Alphonso XII. was kind enough to view my performance from a box. He was so



ALEXANDER HERRMANN AT THE AGE OF 23.

pleased that I was asked to the palace, and knowing him to be a great sportsman, I presented him with a silver-mounted saddle which I had brought with me from Buenos Ayres. He was exceedingly kind, and after I had performed a mathematical trick with cards, which pleased him greatly, he kept asking me continually if he could not be of some service to me. At first I did not accept, but a little while afterwards I thought it would be a great

thing if I could make the King of Spain my confederate in a trick. He consented, laughingly, and it was so arranged that from the stage I was to ask one of the audience to write a number, when the King was to get up and say, 'I will write it,' and do it. Of course, with such a confederate, the trick was accomplished with the greatest effect. The first thing I did in beginning the second part of my performance was to take a blank piece of paper. This I handed to the King, asking him to sign it at the bottom. He did so readily, and the paper was passed from hand to hand and given to me. I conjured up all the spirits that have been or will be, and lo and behold! the paper was closely written from the top to the place where His Majesty's signature was affixed. It was handed back to him, and, while he laughed very heartily, he said, 'I will not deny my signature to this document, which appoints Alexander Herrmann prestidigitateur to the King of Spain, and, as the spirits have done so, I heartily acquiesce.' "

Those who are acquainted with the peculiar properties of sympathetic inks will readily understand the *modus operandi* of the above trick. For example: Copper sulphate in very dilute solution will produce an invisible handwriting, which will turn light blue when subjected to the vapor of ammonia. Again, write with a weak solution of sulphuric acid and the chirography will appear in black letters when the paper is submitted to a strong heat. To obtain the requisite heat, all you have to do is to lay the sheet of paper on a small table which has a top of thin sheet iron or tin. Beneath this top, concealed in the body of the table, is a spirit lamp—not a lamp run by spooks, but "spirits of wine." Ample time for the chemical operation to take place is afforded by the patter of the conjurer.

Another clever trick, bordering on the supernatural, was Herrmann's "Thibetan Mail," the effect of which was as follows: Handing a sheet of note paper to various persons in the audience, Hermann requested them to write sentences upon it, one under the other. When this was accomplished, he tore the paper into halves, and requested some gentleman to retain one half. The other half the magician thrust into the flame of a candle and burned it to ashes. Flinging the ashes in the air, he cried: "I send this message to the mighty Mahatma who dwells in the

great temple of Lhasa. Let him restore the paper intact and return it to me by spiritual post." No sooner said than done. Immediately a District Messenger boy rushed into the theatre, down the center aisle, waving in his hand a sealed letter. Handing this to some one in the audience, Herrmann requested him to break the seal and examine the contents of the envelope. Inside of the envelope he found a second one, and within that a third and fourth, etc. In the last envelope the half sheet of paper was revealed perfectly restored. Its identity was proved by matching it with the half-sheet of writing retained by the first spectator, whereupon they were found to fit exactly, and the writing to correspond. The *modus operandi* of this astounding feat, like all good things in magic, is very simple, but it requires adroitness on the part of the performer to execute properly. The conjurer does not burn the piece of paper which contains the writing, but exchanges it for a dummy which he thrusts into the flame of the candle. The original half-sheet of paper is secretly transferred to an assistant, usually in the following manner: The magician calls for a candle and matches, which the assistant brings in upon a salver. The slip of paper is "worked off" to the assistant in the act of taking the candle and matches from the tray. The confederate then goes behind the scenes, slips the paper into a "nest of envelopes," seals them simultaneously, and gives the package to a stage hand habited as a messenger boy, who runs to the front part of the house to await the cue from the conjurer. This trick was intended as a burlesque on Madame Blavatsky's Indian Mail feat.

I remember very well performing this experiment at an amateur show at the home of Mr. O— H—, of Baltimore, some eighteen years ago, before a company of interested spectators, among whom was the charming daughter of the house, Miss Alice, now the Countess Andrezzi Bernini, of Rome, Italy. My stage was situated in an alcove at one end of the splendid drawing room, and it had a window opening on a side street. My District Messenger boy, hired for the occasion, and privately instructed how to act, was stationed beneath this window, and threatened with all the penalties of Dante's *Inferno* if he went asleep at his post. My brother, Walter Dorsey Evans, after-

wards a skillful amateur prestidigitateur, acted as my assistant, and adroitly threw the sealed note out of the window to the boy. Great was the surprise of my audience when the door bell rang and the stately butler of the establishment brought into the parlor the messenger boy with his sealed letter.

"Where did you get this?" asked the host, as he doubtfully fingered the envelope and examined the address, which read, "To Sahib O— H—, Baltimore, Md."

"Please, sir, an old man dressed in a yellow robe came into the office, and asked that the letter be delivered at once."

"A Mahatma, I presume!" said the lawyer, ironically.

"He had no hat on, sir, only a turbot wrapped round his head."

"A turban, I suppose you mean."

"That's it, sir—a turbing like the Turks wear."

"That will do, young man. You may go."

The boy left. May he be forgiven the lies uttered in my behalf. But all is fair in love, war, and conjuring. He was well tutored what to say in the event of his being questioned, but he performed his part so naturally and lied so artistically and with such a front of brass as to have deceived the most incredulous. I have often speculated upon the subsequent career of that lad. Possibly today he is representing his country abroad in an important diplomatic post, or manufacturing sensational news for the yellow press. Had I been a professional conjurer, I would have hired him on the spot as an assistant.

### III.

Alexander Herrmann was born in Paris, February 11, 1844. Information concerning his family is somewhat meagre. His father, Samuel Herrmann, was a German Jew, a physician, who had come to France to reside, and there married a Breton lady. Sixteen children were born of this union, of whom Carl was the oldest of the eight boys and Alexander the youngest. Samuel Herrmann was an accomplished conjurer, but rarely performed in public. He gave private séances before Napoleon I, who presented him with a superb watch. This timepiece descended to Alexander, and is in possession of his widow.

Carl Herrmann was born in Hanover, Germany, January 23, 1816. Despite parental opposition he became a sleight-of-hand artist, and was known as the "First Professor of Magic in the World." In 1848 he made his first bow to the English people, at the Adelphi Theatre, London, where he produced the second-sight trick, which he copied from Houdin in France. Early in the sixties he made a tour of America, with great success. At his farewell performance in New York City, he introduced his brother Alexander as his legitimate successor. Carl then retired with a fortune to Vienna, where he spent the remainder of his days in collecting rare antiquities. His death occurred at Carlsbad, June, 1887, at the age of seventy-two. He was a great favorite with Czar Nicholas and the Sultan of Turkey and frequently performed at their palaces.

Here is one of Carl Herrmann's German programmes :

## Teplitzer Stadttheater

Dienstag den 8 Juni 1886

### Zweite und letzte Gastvorstellung

des berühmten Prestidigitateur

# Prof. C. Herrmann

aus Wien

unter der Direction des Herrn A. MORINI

#### PROGRAMM

##### I. Abtheilung

1. Wo wünschen Sie es?
2. Die Billard-Kugel
3. Das Schlangentuch
4. Die fliegenden Gegenstände
5. Der Banquier
6. Der Fischfang und das Gegenstück

##### II. Abtheilung

1. Der Sack
2. Die Plantation
3. Die Tasche
4. Der Kegel
5. Der Ring in Gefahr
6. Eine Improvisation

Alle oben ausgeführten Experimente sind Erfindungen des Herrn Prof. Herrmann und werden ohne jedweden Apparat und sonstige Hilfsmittel ausgeführt.

The following is one of Carl's characteristic English programmes. I consider it of great interest to the profession;

**THEATRE ROYAL, HAY-MARKET.**

Mr. B. WEBSTER, Sole Lessee and Manager, Old Brompton.

**MORNING PERFORMANCES.**

MATINÉES  
**MAGIQUE**

Commencing at Two o'clock.

**THE WONDER OF THE WORLD!**

This Morning, Wednesday May 3rd, 1848,

And during the week,

**M. Herrmann**

(OF HANOVER), PREMIER PRESTIDIGITATEUR OF FRANCE, AND THE  
ACKNOWLEDGED FIRST PROFESSOR OF MAGIC IN THE WORLD,

Respectfully announces to the Nobility, Gentry and the Public in general  
that he will give

**FOUR FAREWELL PERFORMANCES,**

Previous to his departure to the Provinces, and will introduce

**SIX NEW EXTRAORDINARY TRICKS,**

NEVER BEFORE EXHIBITED!

L'Album Hanoverien; The Hanoverian Album.

Les Chapeaux Diaboliques; The Diabolical Hats.

Le Coffre infernale; The Infernal Chest.

Le Vase d'Armide; ou, l'horlogerie de Geneve; Armida's Vase; or

The Geneva Clockwork.

La Multiplication des Indes; Indian Multiplication.

Les Mysteres de Paris; The Mysteries of Paris.

**MAD<sup>E</sup>. HERRMANN**

Will also exhibit her extraordinary powers of

**SECOND SIGHT; OR ANTI-MAGNETISM,**

By divining, with Closed Eyes, any objects that may be submitted to this  
proof, which has astonished the most scientific.

**PROGRAMME**

Le Volage des Cartes; Illusions with Cards.

Le Miroir des Dames; the Lady's Looking Glass.

LA BOUTEILLE INEPUISABLE; THE INEXHAUSTIBLE BOTTLE

Robin le Sorcier (piece mecanique); Robin the Sorcerer.

La Poche Marveilleuse; The Marvellous Pocket.

Le Noces de Canaas; The Nuptials of Cana.

Satan et son Mouchoir; Satan and his Kerchief.

Les Colombes Sympathetiques; The Sympathetic Doves.

LE CADRAN MATHEMATICIEN; THE MATHEMATICAL CLOCK.

Le Timbre Isole (piece mecanique); The Isolated Clock Bell.

Le pain de sucre Magique; The Magic Sweetcake.

Plusieurs tours de Cartes nouveaux et de magie blanche; New Illusions

with Cards and White Magic.

La naissance des Poissons rouges, execute en habit de ville; The Birth

of Gold Fish; performed in an Evening Dress.

**GRAND NEW ILLUSIONS FROM INDIA,**

**Le SUSPENSION ETHEREENNE By Ether**

**LE DOUBLE VUE! or, SECOND SIGHT,**

By MADAME HERRMANN, with various new

**ILLUSIONS WITH CARDS AND MAGIE BLANCHE!**

**And a Concert in Imitation of Various Birds,**

By M. HERRMANN.

Alexander was destined by his father to the practice of medicine, but fate willed otherwise.

When quite a boy, he ran away and joined Carl, acting as his assistant. He remained with his brother six years, when his parents placed him in college at Vienna. He did not complete his scholastic studies, but went to Spain in 1859 and began his career as a magician. He appeared in America in 1861, but returned a year later to Europe, and made an extended tour. He played an engagement of 1,000 consecutive nights at Egyptian Hall, London. In 1875 he married Adelaide Scarsez, a beautiful and clever danseuse, who assisted him in his *soirées magiques*. Herrmann became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1876. He died of heart failure in his private car, December 11, 1896, while traveling from Rochester, N. Y., to Bradford, Penn., and was buried with Masonic honors in Woodlawn cemetery, just outside of New York City. He made and lost several fortunes. Unsuccessful theatrical speculations were largely responsible for his losses. He aspired in vain to be the manager and proprietor of a chain of theatres. He introduced the celebrated Treway, the French fantaisiste, to the American public. Herrmann was an extraordinary linguist, a raconteur and wit. Several chivalric orders were conferred upon him by European potentates. He usually billed himself as the Chevalier Alexander Herrmann. His mephistophelean aspect, his foreign accent, and histrionic powers, coupled with his wonderful sleight of hand, made him indeed the king of conjurers. He had a wrist of steel and a palm of velvet. He performed tricks wherever he went, in the street cars, cafés, clubs, hotels, newspaper offices, and markets, imitating in this respect the renowned Bosco. These impromptu entertainments widely advertised his art. He rarely changed his repertoire, but old tricks in his hands were invested with the charm of newness. I can remember as a boy with what emotion I beheld the rising of the curtain, in his fantastic soirées, and saw him appear, in full court costume, smiling and bowing. Hey, presto! I expected every moment to see him metamorphosed into the Mephisto of Goethe's "Faust," habited in the traditional red costume, with red cock's feather in his pointed cap, and clanking rapier by his side; sardonic,



and full of subtleties. He looked the part to perfection. He was Mephisto in evening dress. When he performed the trick of the inexhaustible bottle, which gave forth any liquor called for by the spectators, I thought of him as Mephisto in that famous drinking scene in Auerbach's cellar, boring holes in an old table, and extracting from them various sparkling liquors as well



ADELAIDE HERRMANN.

as flames. In his nervous hands articles vanished and reappeared with surprising rapidity. Everything material, under the spell of his flexible fingers, seemed to be resolved into a fluidic state, as elusive as pellets of quicksilver. He was indeed the Alexander the Great of Magic, who had conquered all worlds with his necromancer's wand—theatrical worlds; and he sighed because there were no more to dominate with his legerdemain. One of his posters always fascinated my boyish imagination. It was

night in the desert. The Sphinx loomed up majestically under the black canopy of the Egyptian sky. In front of the giant figure stood Herrmann, in the center of a magic circle of skulls and cabalistic figures. Incense from a brazier ascended and circled about the head of the Sphinx. Herrmann was depicted in the act of producing rabbits and bowls of gold fish from a shawl, while Mephisto, the guardian of the weird scene, stood near by, dressed all in red, and pointing approvingly at his disciple in the black art. In this picture were symbolized Egyptian mystery and necromancy, mediæval magic, and the sorcery of science and prestidigitation.

#### IV.

When Herrmann came to Baltimore, he always put up at Barnum's Hotel, a quaint, old caravansary that had sheltered beneath its hospitable roof such notables as Charles Dickens, Thackeray and Jenny Lind. Alas, the historic hostelry was torn down years ago to make room for improvements. It stood on the southwest corner of Calvert and Fayette streets, within a stone's throw of the Battle Monument. I spent some happy hours with Herrmann in this ancient hotel, listening to his rich store of anecdotes. I received from him many valuable hints in conjuring. There was something exotic about his tastes. He loved to surround himself with Oriental luxuries, rare curios picked up in the bazaars of Constantinople, Cairo, and Damascus; nargilehs, swords of exquisite workmanship; carved ivory boxes; richly embroidered hangings, and the like. His private yacht, "Fra Diavolo," and his Pullman car were fitted up regardless of expense. Habited in a Turkish dressing gown which glowed with all the colors of the rainbow; his feet thrust into red Morocco slippers; the inevitable cigarette in his mouth, Herrmann resembled a pasha of the East. He was inordinately fond of pets and carried with him on his travels a Mexican dog, a Persian cat, cages full of canaries, a parrot and a monkey. His rooms looked like a small zoo. He seemed to enjoy the noises made by his pets. His opinions concerning his art were interesting.

"A magician is born, not made!" was his favorite apothegm. "He must possess not only digital dexterity, but be an actor as well."

"What is the greatest illusion in the repertoire of the conjurer?" I asked him.

"The Vanishing Lady of M. Buatier de Kolta," was the unhesitating reply.

"Why so?" I inquired.

"Because of its simplicity. The great things of magic are always the simple things. The 'Vanishing Lady' trick has the most transcendent effect when properly produced, but, alas, the secret is now too well known. Its great success proved its ruin. Irresponsible bunglers took it up and made a fiasco of it. In the hands of De Kolta it was perfection itself. There was nothing wanting in artistic finish."

Herrmann related to me some amusing episodes of his varied career. In the year 1863 he was playing an engagement in Constantinople. He received a summons to appear before the Sultan and his court. At the appointed hour there came to the hotel where he was staying a Turkish officer, who drove him in a handsome equipage to a palace overlooking the gleaming waters of the Golden Horn, where "ships that fly the flags of half the world" ride at anchor. It was a lovely afternoon in April. Herrmann was ushered into a luxuriously furnished apartment and invited to be seated on a divan. The officer then withdrew. Presently a couple of tall Arabs entered. One carried a lighted chibouk; the other a salver, upon which was a golden pot full of steaming hot Mocha coffee, and a tiny cup and saucer of exquisite porcelain. The slaves knelt at his feet and presented the tray and pipe to him.

"A faint suspicion," said Herrmann, "crossed my mind that perhaps the tobacco and coffee were drugged with a pinch or two of hasheesh—that opiate of the East, celebrated by Monte Cristo; the drug that brings forgetfulness and elevates its votaries to the seventh heaven of spiritual ecstasy. I thought, 'what if the Sultan were trying some of his sleight-of-hand tricks on me for the amusement of the thing. Sultans have been known to do such things.' Now I wanted to keep cool and have all of my wits

about me. My reputation as a prestidigitateur was at stake. It was very silly, I suppose, to entertain such ideas. But once possessed of this absurd obsession I could not get rid of it. So I waved off the attendants politely and signified by gestures that I did not desire to indulge in coffee or tobacco. But they persisted, and I saw that I could not rid myself of them without an effort. Happy thought! I just took a whiff of the pipe and a sip of the coffee, when, hey, presto!—I made the chibouk and cup vanish by my sleight of hand and caused a couple of small snakes, which I carried upon my person for use in impromptu tricks, to appear in my hands. The astonishment on the faces of those two Arabs was something indescribable. They gazed up at the gilded ceiling and down at the carpet, puzzled to find out where the articles had gone, but finding no solution to the problem and beholding the writhing serpents in my hands, fled incontinently from the room. These simple sons of the desert evidently thought that I had just stepped out of the Arabian Nights Entertainments. At this juncture a chamberlain entered and in French bade me welcome, informing me that His Imperial Majesty was ready to receive me. He conducted me to a superb salon with a platform at one end. I looked around me, but saw only one person, a black-bearded gentleman, who sat in an armchair in the middle of the apartment. I recognized in him the famous 'Sick Man of Europe.' I bowed low to the Sultan Abdul Aziz.

"Well, monsieur, begin," he said in French.

"And so this was my audience. No array of brilliantly garbed courtiers and attendants; no music. Only a fat gentleman, languidly polite, waiting to be amused. How was it possible to perform with any *élan* under such depressing conditions? It takes a large and enthusiastic audience to inspire a performer. I began my tricks. As I progressed with my programme, however, I became aware of the presence of other persons in the room besides the ruler of the Ottoman Empire. The laughter of women rippled out from behind the gilded lattice work and silken curtains that surrounded the salon. The harem was present though invisible to me. I felt like another being and executed my tricks with more than usual effect. The Sultan was charmed and paid me many compliments. A couple of weeks after the

séance, I was invited to accompany him on a short cruise in the royal yacht. On this occasion I created a profound sensation by borrowing the Sultan's watch, which I (apparently) threw overboard. His face fairly blazed with anger; his hand involuntarily sought the handle of his jeweled sword. Never before had the Commander of the Faithful been treated so cavalierly. Seeing his agitation, I hastened to explain. 'Don't be alarmed, your Majesty, for the safety of your timepiece. It will be restored to you intact. I pledge my honor as a magician.' He sneered incredulously, but vouchsafed no reply. 'Permit me to throw overboard this hook and line and indulge in a little fishing.' So saying, I cast into the sea the line, and after a little while brought up a good sized fish. Cutting it open, I produced from its body the missing watch. This feat, bordering so closely on the sorcery of the Arabian Nights, made a wonderful impression on the spectators. I was the lion of the hour. Constantinople soon rang with my fame. In the cafés and bazaars the ignorant populace discussed my marvelous powers with bated breath. The watch trick, however, proved my undoing. One morning I was sitting in my room at my hotel, idly smoking a cigarette and building palaces as unsubstantial as those erected by the Genii in the story of 'Aladdin and his wonderful lamp,' when a messenger from his Imperial Majesty was announced. He made a low obeisance and humbly laid at my feet a bag containing 5,000 piastres, after which he handed me an envelope inscribed with Turkish characters and sealed with large seals.

"'Ah,' I said to myself, 'the Sultan is going to confer upon me the coveted order of the Medjidie. My heart swelled with pride. I was like the foolish Alnaschar, who, while indulging in day dreams of greatness, unconsciously overturned his stock of glassware in the market, thereby ruining himself. I prolonged opening the envelope in order to indulge my extravagant fancies. Finally I broke the seals and read the enclosed letter, which was written in French:

"'It would be better for you to leave Constantinople at once.'

"My budding hopes were crushed. I left the city that afternoon in a British steamer bound for a Grecian port. Either

watch tricks were unpopular in the Orient, or I was encroaching upon the preserves of the Dervishes—a close corporation for the working of pious frauds. But things have changed in Turkey since then.”

## V.

Madame Herrmann, on the death of her husband, sent to Europe for her nephew-in-law, Leon Herrmann, and they continued the entertainments of magic throughout the country, meeting with success. Some curious and amusing adventures were encountered on their travels. One of Alexander Herrmann's favorite tricks was the production of a mass of colored paper ribbon from a cocoanut shell, and from the paper a live duck. This clever feat always evoked tremendous applause. The stupid look of the duck as it waddled around the stage was very laughable. On one occasion, when I was present at the *soirée magique*, the duck seemed to find difficulty in reaching the exit and went around quacking in loud distress, thereby interrupting the conjurer in his patter. Quick as a flash, Herrmann remarked to his assistant, “Kindly remove the comedian.” Shouts of laughter greeted the sally. Herrmann was very felicitous in this species of impromptu by-play. He was indeed, as he described himself, the necromantic comedian. Leon, following in the footsteps of his illustrious uncle, also performed the cocoanut shell trick. He had as assistant a stalwart Ethiopian, who had been with the elder Herrmann, and rejoiced in the stage name of “Boumski.” One day in the city of Detroit, Mich., Madame Herrmann missed from her dressing room at the theatre a valuable diamond ring. Suspicion fell upon the negro, who had attained some proficiency in the *black* art, so far as making things disappear was concerned, though he was not so apt when it came to producing them. Boumski stoutly asseverated that he had seen the duck swallow the ring. The fowl was accordingly slain, and its stomach searched, but without result. The loss of the duck caused considerable grief in the conjuring ménage. It was quite a pet, and trained to perform its part in the magic tricks. Suspicion again fell upon Boumski. Finally, the dusky necromancer confessed that he was the thief and that the poor

duck was innocent. The ring was recovered in a pawnbroker's shop. Boumski went to jail. To revenge himself he exposed the whole repertoire of tricks of the Herrmann company to the newspapers.

After playing together for a season or two, aunt and nephew separated. Today they are performing with great success in vaudeville. Madame Herrmann calls her act "A Night in Japan." It is an exhibition of silent magic—*en pantomime*.



ALEXANDER HERRMANN'S MAGIC TABLE.  
(In the Possession of Francis J. Martinka.)

She was ever a graceful woman, and her exhibitions of *legerdemain* are most pleasing. Beautiful scenery adds to the effect. Leon Herrmann, who resembles his great uncle in personal appearance, is fast becoming a favorite with the American public.

#### VI.

Let us now pass in review some of Alexander Herrmann's tricks. His gun illusion was perhaps his most sensational feat.

I am indebted to the late Frederick Bancroft for the correct explanation of the startling trick. A squad of soldiers, under the command of a sergeant, comprised the firing party. The guns were apparently loaded with genuine cartridges, the bullets of which had been previously marked for identification by various spectators. The soldiers stood upon a platform erected in the centre of the theatre, and Herrmann stationed himself upon the stage. The guns were fired at him, and he caught the balls upon a plate. Upon examination the balls were found to be still warm from the effects of the explosion, and the marks were identified upon them. The substitution of the sham cartridges,



MAGICAL CABINET CONSTRUCTED BY CARL HERRMANN.

The magician places a card in one of the little drawers of the cabinet, and it reappears in any other drawer the onlooker may suggest. (Now in the possession of Mr. Martinka, New York City.)

which were loaded into the gun, for the genuine ones was very subtly executed by means of a trick salver having a small well let into its centre to hold the cartridges. Into this well the marked cartridges were deposited by the spectators. In the interior of the salver was a second compartment loaded with the blank cartridges. The sergeant who collected the bullets shifted the compartments by means of a peg underneath the salver, as he walked from the audience to the stage. The sham cartridges



were now brought to view and the real were hidden in the body of the salver. While the soldiers were engaged in loading their rifles with the blank cartridges, the sergeant went behind a side



"AFTER THE BALL"—I. SCREENING THE LADY.

scene to get his gun and deposit the salver. A couple of assistants extracted the genuine bullets and heated them. Herrmann went to the wing to get the plate, and secretly secured the marked



"AFTER THE BALL"—2. THE ESCAPE.

bullets. The rest of the trick consisted in working up the dramatic effects.

One of Herrmann's best illusions, though not invented by him, was his vanishing lady, known as "Vanity Fair" and "After

the Ball." A large pier glass, which was elevated some two feet above the stage, was brought forward by the magician, and the glass shown to be solid, back and front. Mme. Herrmann, dressed in a handsome ball costume, was now introduced to the audience. By the aid of a small ladder, she climbed up and stood upon a glass shelf immediately in front of the mirror. A narrow screen was then placed about her, so as not to hide from the spectators the sides of the mirror.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Herrmann, "Madame Vanity Fair, who is now gazing at her pretty features in the mirror, has only to pronounce a certain mystic formula known to the Cabalists, and she will be instantly transported to the grand ball at the Opera House. This is a decided improvement on horses and carriages." He fired a pistol, and the screen was pulled away. The lady was found to have completely vanished. But how? Not into the mirror, into that land of adumbration, celebrated in *Alice's Adventures in a Looking Glass*. No, the glass was apparently of solid crystal, and too thin to conceal anyone. This is the *modus operandi* of the trick: The mirror in reality was composed of two sections. The glass shelf, upon which the lady stood, concealed the top of the lower section. The upper section was placed to the rear of the lower mirror, so that its lower end slid down behind it. This upper glass worked like a window sash. When it was pushed up, its upper end was hidden in the wide panel of the frame. The lower part of this large glass had a piece cut out. Through this opening the lady was drawn by an assistant across an improvised bridge—a plank shoved through the back scene, as shown in the illustration. When she had escaped, the counterpoised mirror was again pushed down into its proper place, and the plank withdrawn. The fact that some of the mirror was in view during the exhibition allayed suspicion on the part of the audience. The effect was further enhanced by turning the back of the mirror to the spectators to show them that the lady was not there. It was one of the most novel and effective illusions of Herrmann's repertoire, particularly because of the fact that he was assisted by his pretty and graceful wife, who looked charming in her elegant ball dress, and acted her part to perfection.



HERRMANN I, II, III.

THE OLD AND THE NEW MAGIC

The following is one of Alexander Herrmann's programmes:

The Necromantic Comedian  
**HERRMANN, the Great**

Aided by MME. HERRMANN, in his incomparable entertainment of

**MAGIC, MIRTH AND MYSTERY**

---

**PART I.**

**THIRTY MINUTES WITH HERRMANN,**

All Nature's laws set aside. Laughter born of bewilderment and wonder.  
Concluding with Herrmann's latest and most startling illusion, entitled:

**AFTER THE BALL.**

By MME. HERRMANN.

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**INTERMISSION.**

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**PART II.**

**HERRMANN'S NEW MARVELLOUS SPIRIT SEANCE.**

(During the Seance no one will be allowed to enter or leave the auditorium.)

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**INTERMISSION.**

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**PART III.**

Herrmann's latest thrilling sensational illusion,

**THE ESCAPE FROM SING SING,**

Founded on the recent escape of the notorious convicts, Pallister  
and Roehl, from the famous prison.

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**INTERMISSION.**

---

**PART IV.—FINALE.**

**HERRMANN,**

With a bouquet of mystic novelties. "The closer you watch the less you see."  
Concluding with Herrmann's mystifying masterpiece,

**THE MYSTERIOUS SWING.**

**'RE I**

**THERE I**

**NOWHERE I**

## A TWENTIETH CENTURY THAUMATURGIST.

"I have, since I was three years old, conversed with a magician, most profound in his art, and yet not damnable."—SHAKESPEARE; *As You Like It*.—V. 2, 68.

### I.

The leading exponent of the magic art in the United States today is the famous Harry Kellar. He makes a specialty of pseudo-clairvoyance, second sight, feats of levitation, spirit cabinets, and mechanical illusions. Seizing upon the craze for Hindoo necromancy, mahatma miracles and the like, he presents many of his tricks and illusions as examples of Eastern thaumaturgy. Unlike Herrmann, who bubbled over with wit and humor and acted the comedian, Kellar assumes a Sphinx-like demeanor and envelopes himself in a mantle of mystery. Herrmann was the tricky Mephistopheles of Goethe's *Faust*. Kellar is the Arbaces of Bulwer's *Last Days of Pompeii*—the Egyptian sorcerer and initiate into the rites of Isis and Osiris; or, better still, the Brahmin adept of Crawford's *Mr. Isaacs*. Kellar's entertainments appeal to the scholarly inclined. To see him at work, one is transported in imagination to a Hindoo temple where mahatmas exhibit their miracles. His patter is more or less based on Oriental ideas. For example, "The Yoge's Lamp," which is a very fine trick, invented by a German conjurer, Herr Conradi, of Berlin. The effect is as follows: On a pedestal stands a lighted lamp. Enveloping this lamp with a foulard, the magician carries it across the stage and places it upon a small gueridon with a glass top. A portion of the chimney of the lamp is in view all the time, and within the silken folds of the foulard the light may be seen shining through with subdued effect. Kellar now fires a pistol. The foulard drops upon

the table, and the big lamp vanishes with lightning rapidity. It seems to melt away. It is a seemingly impossible feat, because the glass-topped table has no possible place of concealment about it. The foulard is afterwards passed to the spectators for examination. I am not at liberty to reveal the secret of this surprising trick. I must preserve a discreet silence, in deference to the wishes of Mr. Kellar. As originally invented by Herr Conradi, the lamp reappears in a frame hanging in the center of the stage. But Kellar's method I consider more artistic, and in better keeping with the *mise en scène*. Without patter this feat of magic would fall comparatively flat. In Kellar's hands it is invested with a halo of supernaturalism which is very effective. The following is a brief résumé of the story of the lamp: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have here on this pedestal a copper lamp of antique pattern which was loaned to me by a celebrated Brahmin who presides over a shrine in the Holy City of Benares, India. I have his permission to use it in my thaumaturgic séances, but I must return it to him at a certain hour every evening, as it is needed in the ceremonial rites of the temple at Benares. That hour has now arrived. (*A bell strikes the hour, slowly and solemnly. He wraps the foulard about the lamp, which he places on the table.*) I shall count three—the mystic number of Brahmin theosophy—and fire this pistol. Instantaneously the atoms composing the lamp will be disintegrated by the force of my will and fly through the fourth dimension of space to India, where they will reassemble and materialize in their former shape, and the lamp will appear upon the altar of the temple as of old."

Of course no one credits this rhodomontade, but the conjurer's purpose is accomplished. The trick is given a mystical setting and a certain kind of pseudo-scientific explanation. And all things are possible in nature, for have we not the x-rays, radio-activity, wireless telegraphy, and forces undreamed of a few years ago by the physicists?

## II.

Kellar was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1849—the famous year of the California Argonauts. When quite a young lad he



HARRY KELLAR

was apprenticed to the drug business. In this respect he resembles the great Cagliostro. One day while experimenting on his own account, during the absence of his master, he charged a copper vessel with soda and sulphuric acid, the result being a terrific explosion which tore a hole in the office floor overhead. Thus he began life by making a great noise in the world, and has resolutely kept it up. After the fiasco with the chemicals, he was dismissed by his employer, whereupon he boarded a freight train and went to New York City, where he became a newsboy. His energy and winning manners attracted the attention of Rev. Robert Harcourt, an English clergyman, who adopted him, and gave him a good education. The reverend gentleman intended preparing young Kellar for the church, but such was not to be. Seeing an advertisement in a Buffalo paper that the renowned "Fakir of Ava" wanted a boy to travel with him and learn the trade of magician, Kellar determined to apply for the place. He set out for Buffalo and went to the Fakir's bungalow, a quaint old house in the environs of the city. "When he entered the yard, the Fakir's little black-and-tan dog jumped at him in a friendly way, and showed great delight at the meeting. The Fakir soon appeared, and after he had talked with the boy for a short time, said: 'I have had about one hundred and fifty applications for the place, but that little dog has shown great animosity to every boy who entered the gate until you came. You are the first one he has made friends with. I will give you a trial.' "\* The result was that Kellar became acolyte or familiar to the Fakir of Ava, and all because of a dog. This was reversing the old proverb, "Love me, love my dog" to that of "Whom my dog loves, I love." The reader will remember that Mephistopheles first appears to Faust in the shape of a dog. Perhaps the Fakir's canine was possessed with the Devil, and recognized a future master of the black art in Kellar.

After traveling several seasons with the good old Fakir, Kellar started out on his own account. It was an uphill fight. He met the Davenport Brothers and Fay, alleged spirit mediums but in reality clever conjurers, and joined them, first as assistant, then as agent, and afterwards as business manager. He traveled

\**A Magical Tour*. Chicago, 1886.



with them over the greater part of the United States (including California) and Canada, over the Continent of Europe, through Russia, via Riga, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nijni-Novgorod and Odessa; thence back again to the United States. In the summer of 1871 he piloted them through Texas. They traveled all over that State in wagons. There was no railroad beyond Hearne then, and their route was from Galveston to Houston, Columbus, San Antonio, Austin, Lampasas Springs, Dallas, and Shreveport, and thence by boat down the river to New Orleans.

In the spring of 1873, he left the Davenports, from whom he learned the secrets of rope-tying and the cabinet act, and formed a combination called Fay and Kellar. Eventually he went into partnership with two Chinese magicians. This company was known as the Royal Illusionists. After touring Australia, India and China, Kellar dissolved partnership and came to the United States. During his stay at Calcutta, India, the *Asian* of Jan. 3, 1882, printed the following effusion, a paraphrase on Robert Heller's verse about himself and Anderson:

"For many a day,  
We have heard people say  
That a wondrous magician was Heller;  
Change the H into K,  
And the E into A,  
And you have his superior in Kellar."

Kellar has written several monographs on his art—mainly contributions to magazines; all highly suggestive and entertaining. He says: "There are six qualifications which are the essence of the successful magician, prestidigitateur, necromancer—call him what you may. They are: The will, manual dexterity, physical strength, the capacity to perform things automatically, an accurate, perfectly ordered and practically automatic memory, and a knowledge of a number of languages, the more the better."

Speaking of his experiences as stage helper, or *chela*, to the so-called Fakir of Ava, he says (*Independent*, May 28, 1903): "The 'face' of many a prestidigitateur has been saved and his defeat turned into a glorious victory by the merest chance. One of my first adventures with the Fakir of Ava affords a capital

illustration. We were doing the watch trick—taking a time-piece from some one in the audience, passing it upon the stage in a platter, destroying both platter and timepiece in plain view of the spectators, loading the fragments into a pistol, firing the weapon at a target and bringing the watch—whole and sound—to life again upon the face of the mark, in plain sight of the audience. But on that particular day the target concluded not to do its share of the performance. No watch would it produce; the machinery was out of order. We had to work hard to ‘save face.’

“Disguised as an usher of the house, I went down into the audience with the timepiece, hoping to be able to slip it unobserved into the pocket of the owner. He was sitting at a distance from the aisle; I found it impossible. I did the next best thing—slipped the watch into the waistcoat pocket of the man who sat next to the aisle on the same row with the owner. Then I returned to the stage.

“The Fakir in the meantime was discussing learnedly upon some other subject. When I returned, the question of the whereabouts of the watch was called up and a bell on the stage was summoned to answer questions; one ring for ‘yes,’ two for ‘no.’

“‘Is the watch on the stage?’

“‘No,’ replied the obedient bell.

“‘Is it in the audience?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Is it on the first row?’

“‘No.’

“‘The second—the third, the fourth, the fifth?’

“To each question came a ‘no.’

“‘Is it on the sixth row?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Is it the first man on the row?’

“‘Yes.’

“The eyes of the audience focused upon the unfortunate occupant of the seat.

“‘Look in your pocket, sir,’ said the Fakir of Ava, in his politest, most persuasive tones.

"'Go on with your show there and let me alone,' shouted the enraged seat holder.

"'But I pray you, look in your pocket,' said the Fakir.

"The man obeyed and produced the watch. The trick, called in stage vernacular a 'life saver,' made a hit vastly more impressive than the one originally planned but spoiled by the perverseness of the target."

Kellar's greatest and most sensational illusion is his "levitation"—raising a person and leaving him suspended in mid-air without any apparent means of support, seemingly defying the



FIG. 1.—THE CELEBRATED "LEVITATION" MYSTERY.

law of gravitation. An explanation of this surprising feat is thus described by a writer in the *Strand Magazine* (London):

"An assistant is introduced, laid upon an ottoman, and then sent off into a hypnotic trance (?). The performer takes an ordinary fan and fans the body while it rises slowly about four feet in the air, where it mysteriously remains for any length of time desired. A large solid steel hoop is given for examination, and after the audience is satisfied as to its genuineness it is passed over the body from head to feet, behind the body and over it again, at once dispelling the idea of wires or any other tangible support being used, the body, as it were, journeying through the hoop each time. The suspended assistant is now fanned from

above and gently descends to the ottoman as slowly and gracefully as he rose from it. He is then brought back to his normal state out of the trance, and walks off none the worse for his aerial pose.

"This seeming impossibility is performed by the aid of a cranked bar (Fig. 2 and A, Fig. 3) and a pulley to raise it, the bar being pushed through from the back at the moment when the performer is 'hypnotizing' the subject, and in the act of placing a light covering over him he guides a clamp (B, Fig. 3) and fixes it to the top of the ottoman upon which the subject rests, and

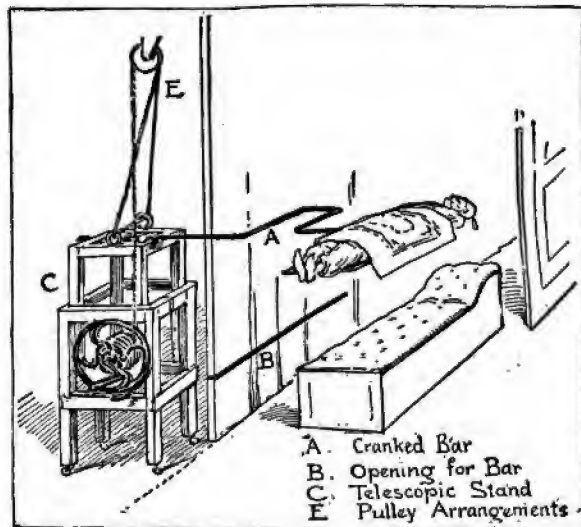


FIG. 2.—"LEVITATION"—HYPNOTISM OR MECHANISM?—WHICH?

which rises, unseen, with him, the edges being obscured by the covering. The bar being the same color as the back scene cannot be noticed, and resting upon a stand (C, Figs. 2 and 3) behind the scenes the same height as the ottoman it is kept firm by the aid of strong supports. Being also double the width (D, Fig. 3) at this part greater leverage is obtained to hold the board upon which the subject rests secure from tilting either way. By means of a pulley arrangement (E, Fig. 2) the assistant behind raises and lowers the body, looking through a small hole in the scene and timing the performer's movements with exactness. Fig. 1 shows the illusion as it appears. Fig. 2—a side view—shows the

means of suspension and the pulley for raising the bar and telescopic stand. Fig. 3 almost explains itself. It shows the method of passing the ring over the body. By putting it on at (1) and passing it as far as the center of the bar (A) it can be brought around and off the body at (2), apparently having passed right over it, although not free from the crank; it is then passed behind the body as far as (3), when it can again be placed over the end (1) and drawn across once more, this time being, of course, quite free, having made an apparent circle right around and across the body. It seems evident to the audience that the subject is so raised and suspended by the performer's magic power alone.

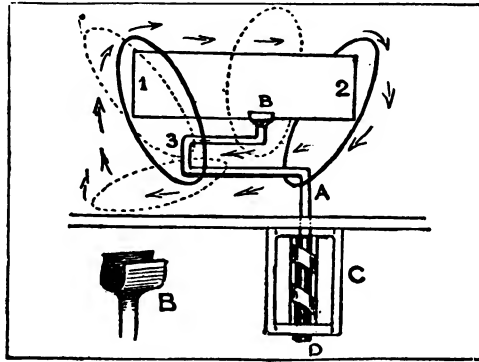


FIG. 3.—“LEVITATION” HOW THE HOOP IS PASSED OVER THE BODY.

The sleeping subject is now lowered, and in the act of being ‘dehypnotized’ the performer slips the crank off, which is immediately drawn in from behind, the subject and performer sharing the applause. It is almost needless to explain that the ‘hypnotism’ is mere sham to heighten the effect and admit of an excuse to stoop in order to fix the cranked bar.”

So far, so good. The above method was undoubtedly the one used in Mr. Kellar’s original presentation of the illusion. But he has since made numerous improvements in it which have puzzled not only the public but the conjurers as well.

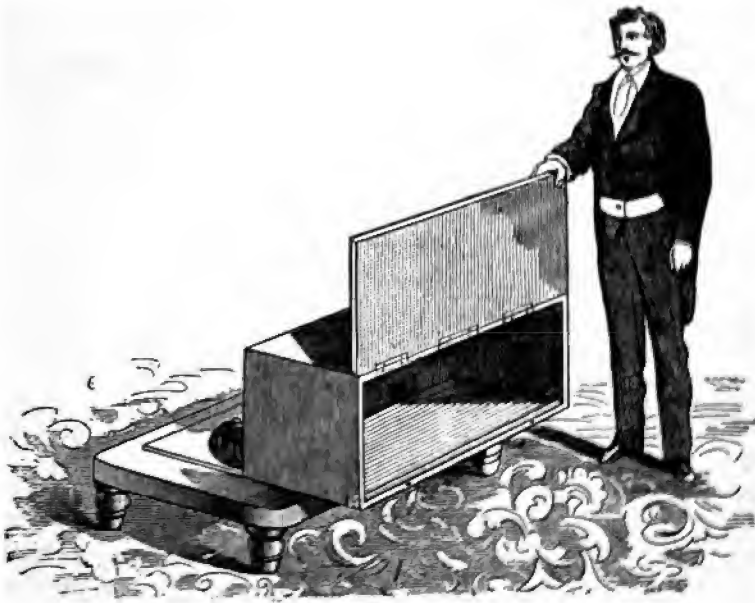
### III.

Kellar has been an extensive Oriental traveler. He has hob-nobbed with Hindoo Rajahs, smoked nargilehs with the

turbaned Turk, and penetrated into darkest Africa. In India he witnessed many exhibitions of thaumaturgy. Concerning the high-caste magic, such as hypnotic feats and experiments in apparent death, he speaks with respect, but the magic of the strolling Fakirs he characterizes as inferior to that of our Western conjurers, with, perhaps, the exception of the Hindoo Basket Trick, which is a clever illusion. When we contemplate the fact that this startling trick is always performed in the open air, amid a circle of spectators, we must give due credit to the histrionic ability of the native conjurers and their powers of misdirection. Robert-Houdin and Col. Stodare introduced this experiment to European theatre-goers, but they were aided by all the accessories of the modern stage and the audience sat at a respectable distance. Let us hear Kellar's explanation of the feat (*A Magician's Tour*, Chicago, 1886).

"At Allahabad I saw a juggler who made a specialty of this trick. Having explained to the spectators what he proposed to do, he allowed them to select a spot on the turf in the open air where the trick should be performed. Here he stationed himself with a basket with a hinged lid at his feet, a little boy at his side, and a sharp sword in one hand. He wore nothing but a breech clout. The company surrounded the conjurer in a circle so close that there was no possibility for any person to pass it without detection. The juggler placed the child in the basket, closed the lid, and began muttering a seeming incantation. While still praying he wound a large white cloth about his arm, and suddenly threw it over the basket, binding one end. He then drew the cloth towards him, brought it up around his waist and tucked the end in his clout, leaving a portion to hang down in front in graceful folds. This much done, he plunged the sword through the basket. As the child's agonizing cries were heard, the man drew back the sword all dripping with blood. Again and again was the sword thrust into the basket, the child's heart-rending screams growing fainter and fainter until they ceased altogether. The Fakir asked that the basket be examined. It was opened and found to be empty. A gleeful shout was heard. The spectators looked in the direction from whence it came, and there sat the child on the limb of a small

tree, waving his arms and seeming as happy as a bird. I paid the thaumaturgist two rupees (one dollar) and the secret of the trick was explained to me. I marveled at first that the man was willing to reveal the mystery for so small a sum, but I soon discovered that only those who wore the Indian juggler's costume, the breech clout, could perform it. The trick is done in this way: When the cloth is spread the boy slips out of



the basket under the friendly cover of the linen, and crawls under the Fakir. Grasping a strap about the man's waist, he draws himself up between the juggler's legs. The cloth when brought about the Fakir's waist hides the little fellow, who, from his unexpected retreat, utters the piercing shrieks of the dying child. With a sponge saturated with a red liquid the conjurer produces the blood stains. When the people rush forward to look into the basket, the boy slips from his place of concealment and makes his presence manifest wherever he has been directed to go."

Herr Willmann describes practically the same trick under the title "Spirit box," designed to prove the permeability of matter. A medium is placed in the box, and after some hocus-pocus the manager reopens it and declares it to be empty; for the purpose of proving his assertion he turns it over toward the public, and when the lid is opened, the medium, who remains all the while in his place, has become invisible, because he is hidden by the interior part of the double wall, which now seems to be the bottom of the box. The box stands upon a podium, in order to show that the medium could not have escaped through the floor. The adjoined illustration reveals the secret of the trick, the explanation of which is as simple as the effect is surprising.

On stages which allow the prestidigitateur to use traps, a trunk is placed so as to allow the prisoner to escape through the floor. The movable wall of the trunk in such a case swings round an axis which lies parallel with the rope that is afterwards fastened around the trunk. The movable wall in the trunk connects with a trap in the floor, and while visitors from the audience closely watch the fastening, the enclosed person makes his escape with the greatest ease.

Kellar is an expert in the rope-tying business, which the notorious Davenport Brothers exploited under the guise of spiritism. When I first saw Kellar at Ford's Opera House, Washington, D. C., in February, 1879, his cabinet act, a burlesque on the Davenport séance, was a feature of his entertainment. After playing a disastrous engagement in Philadelphia, he came to Washington, where his business proved no better, and being "flat broke," as he expressed it, he advertised in sheer desperation a Sunday night lecture on Spiritualism, to be delivered at the old National Theatre. The theatre and advertising were furnished by Mr. Ford, who took half of the gross receipts. I was present on the occasion and recall the excitement. Everything passed off without special incident, until the magician came to the Davenport cabinet test. At this juncture a venerable gentleman arose in the audience and challenged Kellar to permit him to do the tying in the same manner that he had tied the Davenports years before. The gentleman was very much in earnest and remarked: "If you fail to get



loose when tied, you are a colossal humbug; if you do get loose, it will be by spirit agency." Kellar joyfully accepted the chal-



THE MYSTERIOUS TRUNK OPERATED THROUGH A TRAP IN THE STAGE.

lenge. The old gentleman came upon the stage and pinioned the magician's hands behind his back with many intricate and subtle knots. So tightly did he draw the rope that sympathetic

people in the theatre cried, "Shame." Having completed his job, he turned to the spectators with a self-satisfied look on his face, as much as to say, "I have trapped the fox." But he reckoned without his host. No sooner was his back turned to the magician than the latter slipped one hand from its lashings and tapped the skeptic on the shoulder. "If you have two of my hands tied behind my back," said Kellar, "I must have been royally endowed by Nature with a third hand."

Thunders of applause greeted the scene. Even ladies rose from their seats and cheered. "Bravo, Kellar!" was heard on all sides. The old gentleman joined in the demonstration, and acknowledged himself beaten. This episode caused so great a sensation in Washington that two more Sunday evening lectures were given to crowded houses, and Kellar was enabled to pay his debts and get out of town.

It is now pretty well known to conjurers that the Davenports accomplished their feats by secretly taking up slack in the rope while it was being tied, thereby getting a loop hole in the bonds through which to work one hand loose. Frequently they cut the cords with knives secreted up their sleeves, and after the alleged spirit manifestations were gone through with, exchanged the cut ropes for genuine ones, and came out of the cabinet with these, making the spectators believe that some occult agency had freed them from the knots.

There is a conjurer named Joad Heteb who claims to have dropped from the eye of the Sphinx in the form of a tear, and was immediately metamorphosed into the Wizard of the Pyramids. According to his account the spirits of the sorcerers and soothsayers of the olden Pharaohs left their rock-cut tombs and painted mummy-cases to be present at the event. Joad Heteb has a clever press-agent. If Joad fell from the Sphinx's eye in the shape of a tear, Kellar must have dropped from the fabled monster's mouth in the form of a *word*, and that word "Mystery." Kellar is ably assisted by Herr Valadon, an Anglo-German professor of legerdemain, formerly of Egyptian Hall, London. Valadon, upon his entrance on the stage, takes off his gloves, vanishes them, by apparently throwing

them in the air, whereupon a white dove flutters upwards. It is a very pretty effect.



X-RAY PHOTOGRAPH OF KELLAR'S HAND.

(In Possession of Mr. Francis J. Martinka, New York.)

I give one of Kellar's programmes (Proctor's Theatre, New York City, September, 1904):

# KELLAR

THE PEERLESS MAGICIAN.

Special Engagement of

## PAUL VALADON

From England's Home of Mystery, the Egyptian Hall, London.  
Tour under the management of DUDLEY McADOW.

---

FIRST PART.

## KELLAR

In a series of original experiments in pure sleight of hand, thoroughly up to date. A display of marvelous digital dexterity, surpassing anything heretofore achieved in the field of magic. Novel, unique, original, including:

### OLD GLORY,

### THE DYEING ENIGMA,

AND THE GREAT HYPNOTIC SCENE,

### The Levitation of Princess Karnac

The most daring and bewildering illusion, and by far the most difficult achievement Mr. Kellar ever attempted. Absolutely new in principle. The dream in midair of the dainty Princess of Karnac surpasses the fabled feats of the ancient Egyptian sorcerers, nor can anything more magical be found in the pages of The Thousand and One Nights, and it lends a resemblance to the miraculous tales of levitation that come out of India. This

illusion is acknowledged by critics and historians of the goetic art to be the profoundest achievement in either ancient or modern magic. Its perfection represents fifteen years of patient research and abstruse study, and the expenditure of as many thousands of dollars. The result of these labors is a veritable masterpiece of magic, the sensational marvel of the twentieth century and the crowning achievement of Mr. Kellar's long and brilliant career.

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## PART SECOND.

By Herr VALADON

The most accomplished exponent of pure sleight of hand ever seen in this or any other age, introducing his entirely new and original mystery, entitled:

A Drum That Can't Be Beaten

—AND—

Well I'm————!!!

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## PART THIRD.

KELLAR

THE YOGE'S LAMP,

MIND POWER,

THE SIMLA SEANCE,

FLY TO, OR THE PRINCESS OF KARNAC,

An astonishing illusion, exploiting the theosophic theory of projection of astral bodies through the air. An original conception so startling in effect and so nearly approaching the supernatural as to seem miraculous. Affinity with an unseen power seems plausible, and scientific minds marvel at the production.

## A GENTLEMAN OF THIBET.

"I could not remember any more than that the hero [Cagliostro] had spoken of heaven, of the stars, of the Great Secret, of Memphis, of the High Priest, of transcendental chemistry, of giants and monstrous beasts, of a city ten times as large as Paris, in the middle of Africa, where he had correspondents."—COUNT BEUGNOT: *Memoirs*.

### I.

When Madame Blavatsky, High Priestess of Isis, died, there followed a long interregnum during which magic languished. Finally there appeared in the East a star of great magnitude—the five-pointed star of the Gnostics and the Oriental Mahatmas, heralding the coming of another mystic. Madame Blavatsky had set the fashion for Thibetan adepts, and had turned the current of modern occultism towards the Land of the Lamas, so it was quite natural that the new thaumaturgist should hail from the Holy City of Llassa. His name was Monsieur le Docteur Albert de Sarak, Comte de Das, who claimed to be "the son of a Rajah of Thibet and a French Marchioness," and to have been born in the land of marvels.

Monsieur le Comte, in his circulars, described himself as "General Inspector of the Supreme Council of Thibet." He carried about with him a voluminous portfolio of papers containing "the numerous diplomas which he possessed as member of several orders of knighthood and of scientific and humanitarian associations." He also exhibited a Masonic diploma of the Thirty-third degree, which bore the endorsement of all the Supreme Councils of the Rite to which he belonged in the countries through which he had traveled. But he was not a

Fellow of the Theosophical Society. On the contrary, he claimed to have been persecuted by the members of that Brotherhood; to have been frequently arrested and denounced by them as a pretender to the occult, as a false magician, etc., etc.

The Count made his début in Washington, D. C., in the year 1902, where he founded one of his esoteric centers, described as follows in the organ of his cult, *The Radiant Truth*, of which he was editor-in-chief:

"Oriental Esoteric Head Centre of the United States of America, under obedience to the Supreme Esoteric Council of the Initiates of Thibet. Social object: To form a chain of universal fraternity, based upon the purest Altruism, without hatred of sect, caste or color; in which reign tolerance, order, discipline, liberty, compassion and true love. To study the Occult Sciences of the Orient and to seek, by meditation, concentration and by a special line of conduct, to develop those psychic powers which are in man and his environment."

The Count also gave private séances, as we see by his advertisement in the above-named journal:

"Science of Occultism, Double Vision, Telepathy, Astrology, Horoscopy, etc. Doctor Albert de Sarak, Count de Das, General Inspector of the Supreme Council of Thibet.

"Office hours: 3 to 5 p. m.

"Address, 1443 Corcoran Street, Washington, D. C."

Dr. Sarak's first public exhibition of his alleged psychic powers is thus described in the *Washington Post* (March 16, 1902):

"Dr. A. de Sarak, occultist and adept, a professor of the mystic and the sixth sense, gave a demonstration last night before a Washington audience. Several hundred persons gathered in the beautiful assembly hall of the House of the Temple of the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction, 433 Third street, last evening, to witness his weird exhibition of occult powers. After three hours spent in the presence of the East Indian, the audience filed out with apparently something to think about and ponder.

"Professor Sarak, while master of fourteen languages, does **not speak fluently** the English language. Last evening he spoke

in French, and a very charming young woman, also an adept, but of English birth, acted as his interpreter. The Easterner, a man of medium height, was attired in a gorgeous gown of white silk, across the breast of which hung certain mystic emblems of gold and silver. A loose, pale-yellow robe covered this garment during most of the evening. He wore a white turban. The adept wears a pointed black beard, which, with large, languid brown eyes, gave fully the effect that one expects in a student of the mystic schools of Thibet.

"The interpreter stated that Professor de Sarak was born in Thibet and was descended from a noble French family. He had devoted his life, she said, to the study of the occult, first in the Thibetan schools and later with the ascetics hidden in the mountains. He had visited almost every country on the globe, spreading the occult science, which, she declared, some time would bring a rich harvest to all mankind.

"As the professor finished his rapidly spoken French sentences the young woman translated them to the hearers. Dr. de Sarak described the sixth sense in man, saying that it was second-sight, a latent and undeveloped force. He said he merely wished to present the facts of his religion. He explained the wonderful fluid force that existed. He said it is the force that raised the huge stones in building the pyramids and is the same force that brings the bird from the egg, the force which gives man the power of rising as if filled with a buoyant gas, a power which can be concentrated in a tube. He stated that occultism was absolutely nothing but the powers of the will.

" 'It is nothing supernatural,' the doctor said, 'but is merely the hastening of nature's work.'

"A small table stood by a leather chair, and on this burned a tiny candle from the mouth of a brazen asp. The professor stood over the table and busied himself with a pungent incense in an odd burner. A glass plate, with a number of fish eggs, was shown and examined. A large glass bowl was filled with water, and one of the members of the audience was told to carefully brush the eggs into the water. In the meantime three men from the audience had with strong ropes securely bound



the hands of the adept behind his back as he sat in the chair. Broad, clean, white cloths were wrapped about the seated figure, leaving the head free, and the three men selected held the cloths in place. Music rolled from a deep organ, and the head of the adept sank back and a strange light appeared to cross his face. According to the directions of the interpreter the bowl of water containing the fish eggs was placed by one of the three beneath the cloths on the lap of the adept.

"After a period of straining and soft moaning from the white-wrapped figure, for perhaps ten minutes, the cloths were removed, and from the lap of the apparently insensible man was lifted the bowl of water, but instead of the eggs which it contained a few moments before there swam about a dozen of tiny, new-born fish.\*

"Dr. Sarak was then blindfolded with a half-dozen bandages pressing against absorbent cotton, which rested before the eyes. For a while he remained in his chair, while the vibrating tones of an organ filled the room. Then the adept suddenly arose and walked surely and steadily down the room, turning into narrow aisles through the audience as safely as a man might who had his sight. This experiment was to demonstrate double vision at a distance and through opaque bodies. A blank canvas stood on an easel near the adept. Apparently in a trance, he walked to the easel, mixed colors, and in ten minutes a finished picture was the result. A game of dominoes was played with a member of the audience, and previous to the beginning of the game the doctor wrote something on a bit of card and his assistant handed it to someone in the audience to keep. Blindfolded and standing, the adept played the game perfectly, and at the conclusion the card was found to contain the numbers of the last two dominoes played by both the adept and his opponent.

"Experiments were given at the close in the disintegration and restoration of matter, of psychic perception, in which he aroused the wondering admiration of the audience."

\*This reminds one of the experiments of Prof. Jacques Loeb, of the University of Chicago, with the unfertilized eggs of the sea urchin. There was however, in the professor's researches.

## II.

Not many months after this exhibition the Esoteric Centre was founded, and the following extraordinary circular sent out to prominent people in Washington:

DIRECTING COMMISSION OF THE ORIENTAL ESOTERIC  
CENTRE OF WASHINGTON.

UNDER OBEDIENCE TO THE SUPREME ESOTERIC COUNCIL OF THE INITIATES OF  
THIBET.

We address ourselves to those who truly desire to read—to those who truly wish to understand!

For those whose time has not yet come, this page has little value—it will but be scorned and rejected.

But we and our work go onward, with few or with many—Forward, ever forward.

We will, then, be brief, but logical and clear!

THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE ADEPTS OR MAHATMAS  
RESIDES \* \* \* WHERE IT DESIRES! \* \* \* since it possesses powers still unknown in the West; but it has, in fact, its centre of action in a region *not yet* (!) explored, in the North of Thibet.

This Council, composed of Masters who watch that the *Law of the Lotus be not revealed to the vulgar, has its General inspectors in the West* as in the East, who, invested with the necessary powers to demonstrate the truth of that which they teach and propagate, have different missions, which they must fulfill strictly; and although misunderstood and insulted by those who do not understand them, yet they continue to work actively to serve worthily the Holy Cause of True, Veritable Fraternity, having ever before their eyes this device: "Forward, ever forward!"

They may suffer all manner of pain and torments, but none of these—no, nothing can touch them; for the Occult Hand sustains, saves and protects them!

The Supreme Council of the Mahatmas of Thibet has, then, given powers to its Representatives, that they may use them, not to enrich themselves, but to call the attention of every man or woman of high ideals who desires "To go forward, ever forward, and ever higher!"

We care little for their names or their nationality, for names and nations disappear—the Work alone remains!

We have seen some! \* \* \* appear like a shooting star, light up space, and disappear \* \* \* almost without being noticed.

We have *read* and we have *seen* many things! \* \* \* calumnies, sufferings, noble deeds, etc.! \* \* \*

We have *read* that the wicked took them for speculators or sorcerers; and we have *seen* them continue their good works and remain almost poor! \* \* \*

We have *read* that men tried to destroy them, casting the stones of calumny and vengeance; and we have *seen* them, even though weeping inwardly, gather up the stones, asking pardon for those who threw them!

We have, in short, *read* lies, and we have *seen* them present the Truth! \* \* \*

Therefore, this Commission, animated by the most sincere and reasoned faith, strong in the Right which supports it, for Truth and for Justice, makes an appeal to all those who know that to *Think* is to *Create*, to *Create* is to *Love*, and that to *Love* is to *Live*;—to unite themselves with us in a truly fraternal chain, not formed of links of iron which can be broken, but woven of flowers of the soul—a chain which knows neither hatred nor deceit!

From those who come to us we will ask no sacrifices but sincerity and good faith, which we will put to the test; we respect all creeds and customs, but we banish hypocrisy and slander!

*Strong in our Right, invested with the powers bequeathed to us by Him who had the power to give them*, we initiate here in the Capital of the United States, in the heat of the fire of our enemies, this movement of true progress, destined to perpetuate the work of the Adept who has just left us!

They, our enemies, have insulted him, calumniated him, have abandoned him, because he was an obstacle to them; for the Centres which radiate artificial light are afraid of the Radiant Centre of Truth!

"The Radiant Truth" shall be our device, and with it we will go, with our Venerated Master, "Forward, ever forward!"

Therefore let those who truly desire to learn and to elevate their spirit, without fear and without care, and they will find Brothers, true Brothers!

Let those who have betrayed and insulted our Master, whom we will now name,

OUR BROTHER, DR. SARAK,

know: that we have in our ranks persons who, having belonged to Theosophical Societies, have torn up their diplomas, not caring to appear in the list of those who, under pretext of justice and under the false name of Fraternity, defame, calumniate and insult those whose mission is sublime.

Let those, in short, who wish to know \* \* \* many other things, come to us! \* \* \* and we will prove to them both the Supreme Council and the Radiant Truth, and, lastly, also our powers!

We make, then, an appeal, in view of the preceding considerations, to all those who, even if belonging to other organizations, wish to unite with us frankly and sincerely, and we can assure them that later they will thank us with all their hearts.

This will afford them the most conclusive proof of the protection and aid of those Masters or Guides who direct us.

Our Order will publish an official Review, which will have so much success and be so well received that we shall be compelled to reprint it twice.

In this Review, whose propaganda name will be *The Radiant Truth*, will be found all that the most eager student of Occult Truth can desire, for, aside from the Esoteric work, which we have in reserve, we possess documents of inestimable value, which will be published.

Only the members of our Order will have the right to our studies and Esoteric demonstrations of a more advanced degree.

A Convention will be held at Washington at a convenient time, and a Commission of delegates and members of the Order will be sent to the

East to receive instructions and orders from those who direct the spiritual future of the Race of Evolution—this in spite of all Theosophical or sectarian societies and of those who do not desire the Light.

Those, then, who wish to make part of our Order, as Active or Militant Members, or as Correspondents or Delegates, should send in their applications to the General Secretary of the Commission, \* \* \* \*  
1443 Corcoran Street, Washington, D. C.

All the Members of our Head Centre in the United States have the right to receive gratuitously all the publications and work of the Centre.

For further particulars write to the General Secretary at Washington and to the General Delegates abroad.

May Peace be with all Beings!

Viewed and found in conformity with Superior Orders.

The General Secretary of Gen. Inspection:

A. E. MARSLAND.

(M. E. S.)

Given at our Headquarters this 15th day of June, 1902.

The above circular was also signed by the President of the Directing Commission, the Secretary General and the seven Esoteric Members of the Council of the Order at Washington, the majority of them being women. I suppress their names. Possibly by this time they have repudiated Sarak and his absurd pretensions.

### III.

I consulted with my friend, Mr. J. Elfreth Watkins, a clever journalist and interested inquirer into the methods of spiritists and occultists, and we decided to investigate Dr. Albert de Sarak, the Thibetan adept. Mr. Watkins was to go first and have an interview with him, with the idea of exploiting the Count in a newspaper article on modern magic and theosophy; eventually we were to attend one of the mystic's séances together. I shall let Mr. Watkins tell the story in his own words:

"I addressed a letter to Dr. Sarak by post requesting an appointment. I received a prompt response in the form of a courteous note, headed 'Oriental Esoteric Center of Washington,' and which commenced: 'Your letter, which I have received, reveals to me a man of noble sentiments.' An hour was named and the letter bore the signature, 'Dr. A. Count de Sarak,' beneath which were inscribed several Oriental characters.

"I found Monsieur le Comte's house in Corcoran street, late in the appointed afternoon. It was a two-story cottage of yellow brick with English basement, and surmounting the door was an oval medallion repeating the inscription of Monsieur's letter-head. A young woman with blonde hair and blue eyes responded to my ring. I was invited upstairs, she following. Before me was the mind picture of a Lama with yellowed and wrinkled visage, vested in folds of dingy red, with iron pence at his side and counting the beads of a wooden rosary; a Yoge of the great hills; who should say to me, 'Just is the wheel,' or 'Thou hast acquired merit.'

"I was directed to the door of the rear parlor on the main floor, and as I opened it there sat before me, at a modern roller-top desk, a man of slender build and medium height, but with one of the most striking physiognomies I have ever beheld.

"The face was that of a sheik of the desert. The hair was of the blackest and so was the beard, sparse at the side but rather full in front and not long. The eyes were huge, languid and dreamy; the forehead, bared by the training of the hair straight back, was high and bisected by a vein falling vertically between prominences over the brows. The nose was strongly aquiline, and the complexion was more that of the Oriental than of the Latin. The man wore a long, black frock-coat of the mode and faultless in fit; his trousers and waistcoat were of a rough gray cloth.

"Monsieur le Comte rose. The hand which grasped mine was small and soft. He bowed, pointed to a seat and apologized for his crude English, explaining that he preferred to talk to me through an interpreter. The young woman who had ushered me into the presence of Monsieur seated herself at his side and explained that, although 'the doctor' had mastered fourteen tongues, the English had been the most difficult of all for him to fathom. After a pause, Monsieur addressed me in French. The interpreter rolled her blue eyes slightly upward and assumed the gaze of one seeing far away into the sky, through the wall before her—an expression which she seldom changed during the entire interview.

"Through my power of second sight was revealed to me your mission before you arrived,' was the interpretation. 'And now that you come, a good spirit seems to attend you, and I know that you come as a friend. I assure you also that I welcome you as a friend.' The translations were made a sentence at a time.

"I assured Monsieur that this was deeply appreciated.

"I asked him if it might be my good fortune to witness some of his esoteric manifestations, such as I had heard of his performing.

"In the beginning,' he continued, 'I gave some public tests. But now I am engaged in the serious work of teaching, and my time is devoted entirely to the work. If Monsieur pleases, we would welcome his presence as an honorary member of our center. The diploma will cost him nothing. It is a rule of the center that none may attend except members. His diploma will entitle him to attend all our meetings as a spectator. We meet every Wednesday night.'

"All that we will require of Monsieur is that he endeavor to learn, and to describe what he sees with absolute truth.'

"I would ask M. le Docteur if he be a Buddhist,' I said. The question was suggested by a picture of Buddha upon the wall before me.

"Yes, Monsieur, I am a Buddhist, as are my masters in Thibet. Understand, however, that this is not a religion which I am here to teach, but a science—the science of the soul—which does not conflict with any religion. I simply demonstrate to them the powers which I have learned from my masters.'

"What is your opinion of Mme. Blavatsky?' was asked.

"She was a good person—what shall I say?—was good-hearted. She endeavored to enter Thibet, but was unsuccessful. None of the Theosophists have ever learned from my masters. While Mme. Blavatsky lived, however, the Theosophical Society seems to have worked in harmony. Now that she is dead, they are divided by hatred and ill-feeling.

"Once when I was in Paris, the Theosophists, hearing that I was from Thibet, asked me to become an honorary member of their society, just as I invite you, Monsieur. I a

their diploma, as courtesy demanded. I attended a congress in Paris. One speaker mounted the tribune and stated that there was a gentleman from Thibet present who could vouch for their connection with the masters. I was a young man then—let me see—it was about seventeen years ago, but now the weight of fifty years hangs on my shoulders. My young blood boiled and I rushed to the tribune and denounced the statement as false. The Theosophists expelled me from their society—which I had never sought to enter,’ and here he shrugged his shoulders, ‘and since then, they have waged against me a relentless campaign of calumny. In Europe, in South America—everywhere—follows me a trail of circulars and letters published by base calumniators. But still I have gone on with my work, founding centers over the world. I have founded many in South America, but this is the first in this country.’

“I ventured to console the count with words to the effect that all great causes had grown out of persecution. When the interpreter translated these sentiments, Monsieur, who sat at his desk, assumed an expression of extreme pain and half closing his eyes fixed his gaze upon a strange instrument reposing upon the window sill. It was a piece of colored glass with a pebbled surface held upright by a metal support. The interpretation of my words was repeated, but Monsieur raised one finger, continuing his stare of mixed concentration and suffering.

“‘He is now receiving an interpretation from his masters,’ the interpreter told me in a low voice. I did not notice it and interrupted him. The doctor maintained his weird stare for a few minutes, during which I heard from his corner of the room a vibrating sound such as is produced by a Faradic battery. Monsieur rose from his reverie with a sigh and hastily wrote something upon a sheet of paper upon his desk. Then he resumed the conversation.

“‘Fortunately I have preserved extracts from all of the journals which have been friendly to me,’ he said. I was shown a shelf full of scrap-books and the translations of numerous clippings from foreign journals. One of these, credited to the Parisian physicist, M. de Sarak before a committee of

scientists and journalists, during which he hypnotized a cage full of live lions. There were many such accounts, including a description of demonstrations made before the Queen of Spain in 1888; another before the King of Portugal the same year. An article credited to *La Révue des Sciences de Paris*, November 7, 1885, stated that in the Grand Salle de la Sorbonne, Count Sarak de Das, in the presence of the Prince of Larignans and 1,400 people, caused his body to rise in the air about two meters and to be there suspended by levitation.

"It was agreed that my name should be presented to the council as suggested, and two days later I received a letter notifying me of my election as honorary member of the center, congratulating me thereupon and inviting me to be present at the next meeting. I was given the privilege of bringing a friend with me. I informed Mr. Evans, and we agreed to attend the next séance, and make careful mental notes of the events of the evening."

#### IV.

Mr. Watkins and I went together on the appointed evening to the house of the Mage, located in quaint little Corcoran street. It was a stormy night, late in November; just the sort of evening for a gathering of modern witches and wizards, in an up-to-date *Walpurgis Nacht*. We were admitted by the interpreter and secretary, whom I afterwards learned was Miss Agnes E. Marsland, graduate of the University of Cambridge, England.

In the back parlor upstairs we were greeted by the Doctor, who wore a sort of Masonic collar of gold braid, upon which was embroidered a triangle. He presented us to his wife and child, who were conspicuously foreign in appearance, the latter about five years old. We were then introduced to an elderly woman, stout and with gray hair, who, we were told, was the president of the center. She wore a cordon similar to Dr. Sarak's, and soon after our arrival she rapped with a small gavel upon a table, located in the bay window of the front drawing-room.

When she called the meeting to order the Doctor seated himself upon her right, and at her left—all behind the table—were



placed two other women, wearing large gold badges. The interpreter seated herself against the wall beside the Count. Shortly a fifth woman appeared. The Count's wife and child sat quietly upon a sofa in the corner behind him. In the seats arranged along the walls for the audience sat only myself, Mr. Watkins, and a reporter for the *Washington Times*.

The *mise en scène* was well calculated to impress the spectators with a sense of the occult and the mysterious. The table was draped with a yellow cloth, upon which were embroidered various cabalistic symbols. Upon it stood an antique brazier for burning incense, and a bronze candelabra with wax lights arranged to form a triangle. Against the wall, just back of the presiding Mistress of Ceremonies and the little French Mage, was a niche containing a large gilt image of the Buddha, who smiled placidly and benignly at the strange gathering. The walls of the drawing-room were draped with rich Oriental rugs and hung with allegorical paintings. The faint aroma of incense soon permeated the atmosphere; there was a moment of profound silence while the thaumaturgist meditatively consulted a big volume in front of him—a work on mysticism by either Papus or Baraduc, I forget which. I closed my eyes drowsily. In imagination I was transported back into that dead past of the Eighteenth century. I was in Paris, at a certain gloomy mansion in the Rue St. Claude. I saw before me a table covered with a black cloth, embroidered with Masonic and Rosicrucian symbols; upon it stood a vase of water; lights burned in silver sconces; incense rose from an antique brazier. And behold—Cagliostro, necromancer and Egyptian Freemason, at his incantations. The phantasmagoria fades away. I am back again in Washington, and Sarak is speaking rapidly in French. I shall quote as follows from Mr. Watkins' note-book:

"The Doctor spoke of a membership of forty-two persons and his disappointment that only six were present. He then commenced in French a long discourse, citing the alleged experiments of Baraduc on the soul's light, and mentioning the psychic researches of Flammarion. He stated that Marconi had made partial progress in the science of transmitting intelligence without wires, but that his masters had long known of a

more simple method. He described the failures of foreigners to penetrate into Thibet, stating that his masters there were able to place a fluidic wall before any man or beast.\* The women watched their hierophant with intense fascination, save the interpreter, who maintained her saintly gaze up into space, and the wife, who sat by in sublime nonchalance.

"The Doctor then passed into a rear room, donned a long robe of light blue material and returned with the piece of colored glass which I had seen during my previous visit. It was still fitted to the metal support, and with it he brought a bar magnet. He placed the glass upon the table before him, making many passes over it with his fingers, sometimes rubbing them upon his gown as if they were burned. He explained that he had sensitized the glass with a secret fluid which remained thereon as a film. He drew a sort of tripod upon paper and placed the glass and magnet alongside.

"I demonstrated at the last meeting how this power—which I called 'yud'—could be exerted against human beings. You remember that I caused the man to fall from his bicycle. Tonight I will exert the power against an animal,' said the fantaisiste.

"He stated that the lights would all be extinguished; that those present would be stationed at the front windows; that at a given signal he would cause a horse passing the street to halt and remain motionless, to the amazement of the driver. Turning to me, he asked, 'Would Monsieur prefer that the horse be passing eastward or westward?' 'Eastward,' I said.

"Then the lights were put out, but previously his wife had retired, ostensibly to put to bed the boy, who had grown sleepy. All of the members present and the young man—a stranger, evidently a reporter—were posted at the front windows. My companion and I were stationed at two windows within a small hall room adjoining. We were all asked to maintain absolute silence. Vines covered both windows of our room and a street lamp burned before the house to our right. The wait was long,

\*Since Dr. Sarak's séance, Col. Younghusband and a column of British soldiers have penetrated into the holy city of Llassa without difficulty. The fluidic walls of the masters have not impeded the progress of the British in the least degree.

probably twenty minutes, before the first vehicle ventured through the block.

"It was a buggy, drawn by a single horse, but, alas! it proceeded westward. In it were seated two figures, whom I could not see—both enshrouded in darkness.

"My impatience was now well nigh unbearable. In a few minutes, however, I heard the clatter of hoofs from the opposite direction—eastward.

"A buggy with a single horse came into view. One figure wore a white fascinator or shawl about the head. The other was a man. The horse slowed into a walk just before reaching the house. It halted directly in front of us, then backed a few feet and the rear wheel went upon the sidewalk opposite.

"‘What’s de mattah wid dat hoss?’ said a negro voice. ‘Nebber seen him act dat way befo’!’ The horse stood still for a minute; then the driver clucked him up and he proceeded on his way. It was too dark to see the positions of the reins or the features of either occupant of the vehicle. Soon afterward Madame de Sarak returned with the child and pointed toward him, as if to say: ‘See, he has recovered from his sleepy spell!’

"At this point the Doctor retired and returned gowned in white. He passed to us a canvas such as is commonly used by painters in oil. He placed this upon an easel. At his right was a table bearing brushes and two glasses filled, one with dark blue and the other with white paint. He then distributed large napkins among those present and handed to me two balls of absorbent cotton. These I was told to place over his eyes, and as I did so the two other men and several of the women bound the napkins over the cotton. They were tied very tightly and two were crossed. We inspected the bandages and pronounced them secure. Then the white-robed figure, in this grotesque head-gear, asked me to lead him to an arm-chair in the far end of the rear apartment, which I did. Seated in the chair, his chin hanging down upon his breast, he remained for some time, until suddenly he arose and walked straightway to his wife and child, who were sitting behind the table in the front room, upon the sofa as previously. He knelt before them, kissed the little one, his back being toward us the while. Then he walked directly

to my companion and took the latter's watch from his pocket without fumbling. He now proceeded to the easel, and, selecting a brush from the table, dipped into the blue paint and printed across the top of the canvas 'Fifteen Minutes.' I looked at my companion's watch and it registered half past 10. Evidently the words denoted the time in which the picture was to be painted. One of the women present requested that a moonlight scene in Thibet be reproduced. Sudden movements of two brushes, dipped in the two colors, transformed the letters into a clouded sky through which a moon was bursting. Below was outlined a sort of tower, to the left of which was painted a tree. After some detail in the picture was outlined in blue, for example, the white paint would be applied in lines exactly parallel to the first, and many such touches of the brushes indicated that the painting was not made as the result of memory alone. Near the end of the painting the Doctor again approached his wife and child, leading the latter to the easel and placing him upon a chair before it.

"The child was given a brush and dabbed paint upon various parts of the picture. Sometimes he seemed to be guiding his father's hand, but during this operation the latter was not doing difficult work. All the while the adept was chanting something which the child repeated. The picture was signed with Oriental symbols placed in one corner. Then the painter made a gesture of great fatigue, sighed very audibly and staggered into the rear room. He fell upon a sofa near the door and motioned to have the bandages removed. I removed some, assisted by his wife, who brought him a glass of water. The cotton was in its place as far as I could see. His eyes remained closed after they were uncovered, and his attitude was that of a man who had fainted. His wife held the water to his lips, and then, lifting each of his eyelids, blew into them. Then the Mage arose and, complaining of fatigue, resumed his seat behind the table. Shading his eyes with his hand, he looked toward the canvas, saying: 'Behold the house in Thibet where I was initiated into the mysteries of the Mahatmas.'

"After the exhibition of 'double vision' De Sarak performed the cigarette paper test.

"He concluded the séance with a brief speech, in which he stated that it was customary to take up a collection for charity at each meeting. A small cloth bag was passed by one of the women. The secretary announced that \$1.62 had been realized. Then the president pounded with her gavel and adjourned the meeting. The secretary ushered us to the door, and we went out into the darkness.

"Such were the miracles of the adept Albert de Sarak, Comte de Das, and such was his propaganda."

V.

Is it not strange that people can take such performances seriously? The cigarette test—an old one—and familiar to every schoolboy who dabbles in legerdemain, was a mere trick, dependent upon clever substitution and palming. The absurd splatterdash which the Mage painted while blindfolded had nothing of Thibetan architecture about it, but resembled a ruined castle on the Rhine. That he was able to peep beneath his bandages at one stage of the proceedings seems to me evident. He perhaps arranged this while kissing and fondling the little child. Long practice, however, would enable him to paint roughly while his eyes were bandaged. The horse episode was of course a pre-arranged affair, yet I admit it was very well worked up and gave one a creepy feeling—thanks to the *mise en scène*. But the Comte de Sarak has other occult phenomena up his sleeve, which I have not yet witnessed—among them being the shattering of a pane of glass by pronouncing the words, "Forward, ever forward"; the instantaneous production of vegetation from the seed; and the immediate development of fish from spawn. He doubtless owes much of his notoriety to the newspapers, which herald his alleged feats of magic in sensational style.

A few months after my séance at the adept's house, the Washington papers announced the fact that the Count de the famous magician, was projecting a personally conducted tour to the Orient for the members of his cult and all those

interested in occultism. The pilgrims were to visit the inaccessible shrines, pagodas, crypts, and lamaseries of the East, under the ciceronage of the Count, who doubtless was to break down for them by sheer force of will the fluidic barriers that surround Lhasa, Thibet, where dwell the Mahatmas, in order that the tourists might penetrate into the sacred city.

I never heard of anybody leaving Washington to go on this expedition, except the Count—and he, I understand, got no farther than New York City, where the French *table d'hôte* abounds, and magic and mystery are chiefly to be studied in the recipes of French *chefs de cuisine*.

## MAGICIANS I HAVE MET.

"To succeed as a conjurer, three things are essential—first, dexterity; second, dexterity; and third, dexterity."—ROBERT-HOUDIN.

### I.

Imro Fox, "the comic conjurer," was born May 21, 1852, in Bromberg, Germany. He came to the United States in 1874, and after serving as a *chef de cuisine* in several New York hotels, finally came to Washington, where he presided over the kitchen of the old Hotel Lawrence, a famous resort for vaudeville people. When not engaged in his culinary duties, he practised sleight of hand tricks. In the year 1880, a strolling company came to the city, having as its bright, particular star a magician. The man of mystery, alas, was addicted to the flowing bowl, and went on a spree after the first night's performance. The manager of the troupe, who was staying at the Lawrence, was in despair. He told his woes to the proprietor of the hotel, who informed him that the *chef* of the establishment was a conjurer. Descending to the "lower regions" (a capital place, by the way, in which to seek a disciple of the black art), the theatrical man discovered the genial Imro studying a big volume. Near by a black cat sat blinking at him. Upon the stove was a huge caldron. The *mise en scène* of the place was decidedly that of a wizard's studio. But things are seldom what they seem.

The book which Fox was so industriously conning proved to be a dictionary of the French language, not a black-letter tome on sorcery. The *chef* was engaged in making up a *ménu* card, in other words, giving French names to good old Anglo-Saxon dishes. The caldron contained soup. The cat was the regular feline habitué of the kitchen, not an imp or familiar demon.

"The *chef*, I believe," said the manager, politely.

"I am," said Fox.

"You are an amateur conjurer?"

"I amuse myself with legerdemain occasionally."

"You're the man I'm looking for. I am the proprietor of a vaudeville company playing at . . . . . The gentleman who does the magic turn for me has disappeared; gone on a prolonged debauch. . . ."

"Ah, I see," interrupted Imro, "a devotee of the 'inexhaustible bottle' trick."

"I want you to take his place," said the manager, "and fill out the week's engagement. I will arrange matters with the hotel proprietor for you."

"*Donner und Blitzen!*" cried Fox. "Why, I never was on a stage before in my life. I'd die with fright. Face an audience? I'd rather face a battery of cannons."

"Nonsense," answered the theatrical man. "Do help me like a good fellow. It will be money in your pocket."

After considerable persuasion, Fox consented. The culinary department was turned over to an assistant. That night Imro appeared on the stage, habited in a hired dress suit that did not fit him like the proverbial "paper on the wall." With fear and trembling he made his bow, and broke the ice by the following allusion to his very bald pate: "Ladies and gentlemen, why is my head like Heaven? . . . You give it up! Good! Because there is no parting there!" Amid the shout of laughter occasioned by this conundrum, Fox began his card tricks. In the argot of the stage, he "made good."

This event decided him; he abandoned cooking for conjuring; *ménu* cards for the making of programmes.

His entertainment is quite original. The curtain rises on a gloomy cavern. In the middle is a boiling caldron, fed by witches *à la* Macbeth. An aged necromancer, dressed in a long robe with a pointed cap on his head, enters. He begins his incantations, whereupon hosts of demons appear, who dance about the caldron. Suddenly amid the crash of thunder and a blinding flash of light, the wizard's cave is metamorphosed into a twentieth century drawing-room, fitted up for a con-



juring séance. The decrepit sorcerer is changed into a gentleman in evening dress—Mr. Fox—who begins his up-to-date entertainment of modern magic. Is not this cleverly conceived?

## II.

A few thumbnail sketches of some of the local magicians of New York City will not come amiss. First, there is Elmer P. Ransom, familiarly known as "Pop." He was born in *old* New York, not far from Boss Tweed's house. He still lives in that quaint part of the city. He knows New York like a book. Once he guided me through the Jewish ghetto, the Italian and Chinese quarters. It was a rare treat. Ransom is a good all around magician, who believes in the old school of apparatus combined with sleight of hand. And so do I.

Next we have Adrian Plate, who was born in Utrecht, Holland, in 1844. His rooms in upper New York are the Mecca of all visiting magicians. He has a fine collection of books on magic, and a scrap-book *par excellence*. Thanks to this clever conjurer, I have secured translations of rare and curious Dutch works on necromancy. Plate has always something new up his sleeve.

T. Francis Fritz (Frank Ducrot) edits *Mahatma*, a magazine for magicians, and is a good conjurer.

Sargent, the "Merry Wizard," and second president of the S. A. M., is an adept in the psychology of deception and a recognized authority on the subject of patter. His articles on magic, published in *Mahatma*, are very interesting. He wields a facile pen as well as a wand, and like Silas Wegg occasionally drops into poetry. His poetical effusion, "In Martinka's Little Back Shop," brought out some years ago in *Mahatma*, has been widely copied.

Henry V. A. Parsell, for a number of years the archivist of the S. A. M., is a devotee of magic and freemasonry; a student of the occult; and a mechanical engineer by profession. He is especially fond of electrical tricks. He signs himself *Paracelsus*, not that he has any special love for the Bombast of Hohenheim, but because the name is a euphonic paraphrase of his own cognomen, and redolent of sorcery.

Dr. Golden Mortimer, first president of the S. A. M., is a gentleman of culture. He was born in New York City, December 27, 1854. He began life as a magician, and was a pupil of Robinson, the Fakir of Vishnu. He eventually toured the country with an entertainment of the Heller order, known as "Mortimer's Mysteries," and was very successful. Graduating finally as a physician, he abandoned the *art magique* as a profession.

Krieger, the arch-master of cup-and-ball conjuring, the successor of Bosco, often drops into Martinka's. He is of Jewish birth. With his little family he travels about, giving exhibitions of his skill, at summer hotels, seaside resorts, clubs, lyceums, etc. The errant propensities of the Krieger *ménage* gained for it the sobriquet of the "Wandering Few," a paraphrase of the title of Eugene Sue's weird novel, *The Wandering Jew*. To listen to Krieger's funny accent; to see him shake his bushy locks; to watch his deft fingers manipulate the little cork balls, is to enjoy a rare treat. When the small balls grow to large ones and finally change into onions, potatoes, lemons, and apples you are quite ready to acknowledge that Krieger's art is the acme of legerdemain.

But the prince of Hanky Panky is undoubtedly Nate Leipziger. For close work with cards, coins, watches, handkerchiefs, and the like he is pre-eminent in this country, perhaps in any country. His great forte is amusing after-dinner parties. His art is extremely subtle and undetectable, even to those acquainted with the mysteries of magic. He is the inventor of many new sleights and conjuring artifices.

Leipziger was born in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1873, and was apprenticed at an early age to an optical instrument maker. Grinding and polishing lenses is his trade, but he abandoned it for conjuring when he came to the United States. It is a curious fact that the majority of great magicians have been recruited from among watchmakers, optical instrument manufacturers, chemists, and physicians. Hundreds of them have been doctors. Among our American Indians medicine and magic are synonymous terms. The "medicine man" is the High Priest, the Mage, of the tribe. As every student of psychology knows, there is a good deal of humbug about the practice of medicine.

Suggestion aided by deception in the way of bread pills and harmless philtres effect as many cures as potent drugs. Surgery is an exact science, medicine is experimental. The medico takes naturally to magic, for he is already an adept in the art of suggestion. Apropos of this let me quote a sentence from an article by Joseph Jastrow (*Psychological Review*, Vol. 7, p. 617): "A dominant principle, most frequently illustrated, is the kinship of conjuring to suggestion; for it is the suggestion of things not done quite as much as the concealment of those that are done that determines the success of modern conjuring."

### III.

Horace Goldin is known as the "Whirlwind Wizard," so called because of the rapidity of his work. His tricks and illusions follow each other with kaleidoscopic effect. Goldin can compress more magic feats in a twenty-minute turn, than the average conjurer can execute in an hour. But his act is a silent one; he uses no patter whatever. As a general rule this is to be condemned. Amateurs are warned against it. Says Professor Jastrow, the psychologist: "The 'patter,' or setting of a trick, often constitutes the real art of its execution, because it directs, or rather misdirects, the attention." More than that, artfully worded patter weaves about a conjuring experiment an atmosphere of plausibility; people are often convinced that red is black, etc. Consider the dramatic setting of Houdin's magic chest and aerial suspension. Without patter these charming tricks would have degenerated to the commonplace. But Goldin is a law unto himself, and must not be judged by any standards other than those laid down by himself. He is a genius.

Goldin, who is of Jewish descent, was born in Wilana, Russia, December 17, 1874. He began life as a traveling salesman. He took to conjuring to amuse himself and his friends. Afterwards he went on the stage. He has played before Edward VII of England and William II of Germany. While playing an engagement in New York City, at Hammerstein's Theatre, August, 1904, he went about the city in an automobile known as the "red devil." Some of his facetious friends described him as a "little white devil" in a "big red devil." Among the numer-

ous clever illusions performed by him is the "Invisible Flight," an exposé of which was published in the *Strand*, as follows:

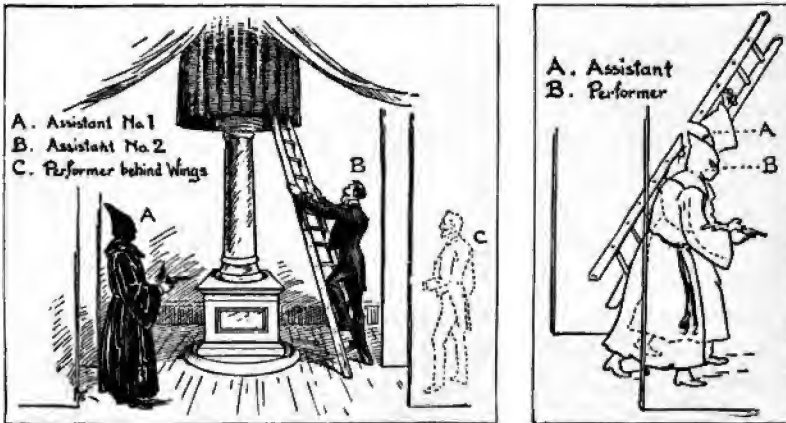
"A pedestal about seven feet high is seen in the centre of the stage. The performer introduces a liveried assistant and entirely envelops him in a black cloak and hood, and puts a pistol in his right hand. He then fetches a ladder, places it against the pedestal, walks up, and steps from it on to the top of the pedestal, behind a curtain, which is hung in front, just reaching to his feet. The assistant puts the ladder back and fires the pistol, when immediately the curtain rises and a great surprise meets the gaze of the audience, for there on the pedestal, where the performer stepped only a moment previously, stands the liveried servant; but the climax is reached when the supposed assistant pulls off the cloak and hood, showing him to be none other than the performer himself.

"To perform this illusion it is necessary to have two assistants as near alike as possible and of similar stature to the performer himself, the rest being quite simple but requiring much exactness in execution. The performer cloaks assistant No. 1 and hands him the pistol, then goes to fetch the ladder, part of which is showing between the wings, the other part being held by assistant No. 2, who is made to look, at a quick glance, exactly like the performer. The performer catches hold of the ladder and steps between the wings, leaving one leg showing; the assistant (No. 2) steps out backwards with the ladder, covering the performer momentarily, who then steps right in between the wings. The natural movement of the assistant in stepping back at the right moment looks as if it is still the performer; indeed, he is never suspected to be otherwise. Assistant No. 2 places the ladder against the pedestal, walks up, and, stepping behind the curtain, unhooks a duplicate livery from it, quickly puts it on, pockets wig and mustache, or any other make-up which went to match the magician's appearance, and stands ready for the curtain to be raised, at the sound of the pistol, by a string leading inside to one of the stage hands. During this time assistant No. 1 has taken the ladder back to its original place, and the performer, who has meanwhile quickly donned a cloak and hood exactly as worn by assistant No. 1, reverses his previous action, stepping back

with a pistol in his right hand, this again being so natural as not to excite suspicion. He then fires, when assistant No. 2 is seen upon the pedestal, believed by the audience to be assistant No. 1, the idea of a duplicate never occurring to them, as they have not seen the change take place. The performer then takes off his cloak and hood, bowing smilingly to the bewildered audience."

## IV.

One of the most entertaining men in the profession is Frederick Eugene Powell. He is a man of scholarly attainments. Powell was born in Philadelphia, and was attracted to magic



THE INVISIBLE FLIGHT.

after having witnessed a performance by good old Signor Blitz. He became quite an expert at the art and gave entertainments for the amusement of his fellow students at the Pennsylvania Military Academy, at Chester, from which institution he graduated in 1877 with the degree of Civil Engineer and the rank of Lieutenant. After a short career on the stage as a magician, he entered into mercantile life. Eventually he returned to his old love, magic, and began a series of entertainments at Wood's Theatre, corner of Ninth and Arch Streets, Philadelphia. His "second-sight trick," in which he was assisted by his brother

Edwin, was one of his strong cards. Robert Heller had just died, and there was no one to continue the art of second sight but Powell. After touring the United States and Spanish America he left the stage to take the intermediate chair of mathematics at the Pennsylvania Military Academy, which post he held for three years. The sedentary life affected his health, and he returned to the stage. Powell has played several long engagements at the Eden Musée, one of them lasting for six months. In the year 1892, he produced at this theatre for the first time to a New York audience the illusion "She." In 1902 he visited the Sandwich and Samoa Islands, and played in the principal cities of Australia. Powell was the first conjurer to introduce the improved "coin ladder" in this country.

Howard Thurston, the American illusionist, was educated for the ministry, but abandoned theology for conjuring. He possesses great skill with cards, and is an inventor of many novel feats of spectacular magic.

His stage represents an Oriental scene. Enter Thurston dressed somewhat after the fashion of a Tartar chieftain: loose trousers, short jacket, turban and high boots. He introduces his act with card manipulation, after which he produces from a shawl thrown over his arm a bowl from which bursts a flame, then another bowl from which spurts a jet of water like a fountain. He stands on a small stool of glass and produces a great quantity of water from a large tin can, by dropping into it the half of a cocoanut shell. Enough water wells up from the can to fill several receptacles. The thaumaturgist then defies the laws of gravitation by suspending a large ball in the air, *à la* Mahomet's alleged coffin at Mecca, and passes a hoop about the ball. When he leaves the stage, the ball follows him. This feat is accomplished by a stream of compressed air which plays upon the globe from a receptacle secreted in the sleeve of the performer. The conjurer walks to a stool, covers it with a shawl, and produces a life-size statue, which undergoes various pretty transformations. The illusion suggests that of Professor Pepper. Finally he produces pigeons from a borrowed hat, and toy balloons which float in the air. Altogether it is a pleasing and curious act.



POWELL, THE PRESTIDIGITATEUR

## V.

William G. Robinson for years acted as Alexander Herrmann's stage manager and machinist. He is a devotee of the magic art, a collector of rare books on legerdemain, and the inventor of many ingenious sleights, tricks, and illusions. When not employed at the theatre, he spends his time haunting the second-hand book stores, searching for literature on his favorite hobby. He has found time to write a profoundly interesting brochure called *Spirit Slate-Writing*, published by the Scientific American Company. After reading this work, I cannot see how any sane person can credit the reality of "independent slate-writing." It is a mere juggling trick.

Robinson was born in New York City, April 2, 1861, and received a common school education. He started life as "a worker in brass and other metals," but he abandoned the profession of Tubal Cain for conjuring. After the death of Herrmann, Robinson went as assistant to Leon Herrmann for several seasons, and then started out to astonish the natives on his own account, but without any appreciable success. Just about this time there came to the United States a Chinese conjurer named Ching Ling Foo, with a repertoire of Oriental tricks. One of them was the production of a huge bowl of water from a tablecloth, followed by live pigeons and ducks, and last but not least a little almond-eyed Celestial, his son. This was but a replica of the trick which Phillippe learned from the Chinese many years ago. Foo's performances drew crowds to the theatres. It was the novelty of the thing that caught the public fancy. In reality, the Mongolian's magic was not to be compared with that of Herrmann, Kellar, or Goldin. Beneath the folds of a Chinese robe one may conceal almost anything, ranging in size from a bedpost to a cannon ball. When Foo's manager boastfully advertised to forfeit \$500 if any American could fathom or duplicate any of the Celestial's tricks, "Billy" Robinson came forward and accepted the challenge. But nothing came of it. Foo's impressario "backed water," to use a boating phrase. Robinson was so taken with Ching Ling Foo's act that he decided to give similar séances, disguising himself as a Chinaman. Under the name of Chung Ling Soo he went to England,



accompanied by his wife and a genuine Chinese acrobat. He opened at the Empire Theatre, and not only reproduced Foo's best tricks but added others of his own, equally as marvelous. His success was instantaneous. Theatrical London went wild



CHUNG LING SOO.  
(Mr. Wm. G. Robinson.)

over the celebrated Chinese wizard, and gold began to flow into the coffers of the Robinson ménage. So well was the secret kept that for months no one, except the attachés of the theatre, knew that Chung Ling Soo was a Yankee and not a genuine Chinaman. The make-up of himself and wife was perfect. Robinson

even had the audacity to grant interviews to newspaper reporters. He usually held these receptions at his lodgings, where he had an apartment fitted up *à la Chinois*; the walls hung with silken drapery embroidered with grotesque dragons. The place was dimly lit by Chinese lanterns. Propped up on silken cushions, the "Yankee Celestial" with his face made up like a finely painted mask, sipped his real oolong, and laughed in his capacious sleeves at the credulity of the journalistic hacks. He gave his opinion on the "Boxer" trouble, speaking a kind of gibberish which the previously tutored Chinese acrobat pretended to interpret into English. Gradually it leaked out in theatrical circles that Chung Ling Soo was a Yankee, but this information never came to the public ear generally.

At the close of the "Boxer" uprising the real Ching Ling Foo had returned to his beloved Flowery Kingdom, loaded down with bags full of dollars extracted from the pockets of the "Foreign Devils," yclept Americans. Under his own vine and bamboo tree he proceeded to enjoy life like a regular Chinese gentleman; to burn joss sticks to the memory of his ancestors, and study the maxims of Confucius. But the longing for other worlds to conquer with his magic overcame him, and so in the year 1904 he went to England. Great was his astonishment to find that a pretended Mongolian had preceded him and stolen all of his thunder. In January, 1905, Robinson was playing at the Hippodrome, London, and Ching Ling Foo at the Empire. There was great rivalry between them. The result was that Foo challenged Soo to a grand trial of strength, the articles of which appeared in the *Weekly Despatch*. "I offer £1,000 if Chung Ling Soo, now appearing at the Hippodrome, can do ten out of the twenty of my tricks, or if I fail to do any one of his feats."

A meeting was arranged to take place at the *Despatch* office, on January 7, 1905, at 11 a. m. The challenged man, "Billy" Robinson alias Chung Ling Soo, rode up to the newspaper office in his big red automobile, accompanied by his manager and assistants. He was dressed like a mandarin. The acrobat held over his master's head a gorgeous Chinese umbrella. Robinson gave an exhibition of his skill before a committee of newspaper

men and theatrical managers. Foo came not. The next day arrived a letter from Ching Ling Foo's impressario saying that the Mongolian magician would only consent to compete against his rival on the following condition: "That Chung Ling Soo



first prove before members of the Chinese Legation that he is a Chinaman." This was whipping the Devil (or shall I say dragon?) around the stump. The original challenge had made no condition as to the nationality of the performers.

The *Despatch* said: "The destination of the challenge money remains in abeyance, and the questions arise; 'Did Foo fool Soo? And can Soo sue Foo?'"

The merits of this interesting mix-up are thus summed up by Mr. John N. Hilliard, in an editorial published in the *Sphinx*, Kansas City, Mo., March 15, 1905:

"While we do not take the controversy with undue seriousness, there is an ethical aspect in the case, however, that invites discussion. In commenting disparagingly on the professional ability of the Chinese conjurer, in belittling his originality and his achievements in the magic arts, Mr. Robinson (Chung Ling Soo) is really throwing stones at his own crystal dwelling place. Despite the glowing presentments of his press agent, one single naked truth shines out as clearly as a frosty star in a turquoise sky. It is violating no confidence to assert that had it not been for Ching Ling Foo, the professional status of Mr. William E. Robinson, masquerading as a Chinaman, and adopting the sobriquet of 'Chung Ling Soo,' would be more or less of a negative quantity to-day. Ching Ling Foo, the genuine Chinaman, is indisputably the originator, so far as the Western hemisphere is concerned, at least, of this peculiar act, and Robinson is merely an imitator. Robinson is shrewd and has a 'head for business.' He doubtless realizes, as well as his critics, that in the dress of the modern magician he would not be unqualifiedly successful, despite his skill with cards and coins and his knowledge of the art. The success of Ching Ling Foo in this country was his opportunity. Adopting the dress and make-up of a Mongolian, and appropriating the leading features of Ching's act, he went to Europe, where the act was a novelty, and scored a great success. Of course, from a utilitarian point of view, this success is legitimate; but in the light of what the American magician really owes to the great Chinese conjurer, it is ridiculous for Robinson to pose as 'the original Chinese magician,' and for him to say that Ching Ling Foo is 'a performer of the streets,' while he is the 'court magician to the Empress Dowager.' This may be good showmanship, but it is not fair play. The devil himself is entitled to his due; and, the question of merit aside, the indubitable fact remains that it is Ching Ling Foo who is the 'original Chinese magician,' while 'Chung Ling Soo' is an imitator of his act and a usurper in the Oriental kingdom.



But outside of the ethical nature of the controversy, we refuse to take it seriously."

Robinson calls himself "Chung Ling Soo, he of the One Button [mandarin], Royal Chinese Conjurer." Chung Ling Soo, in the vernacular of Confucius, means Double Luck, or extra good luck. Wherever he goes he puts on exhibition in the



A LONDON SIGN BOARD OF CHUNG LING SOO.

lobby of the theatre the resplendent robes of his ancestors—"a piece of sacrilege," says an English paper, "no Chinaman the world has ever known has been guilty of before. Some of the exhibits are from the Imperial palace at Peking." These gorgeous garments were doubtless purchased in some Chinese bazaar in London. According to a Holloway journal, Robinson is the possessor of a wonderful collection of Oriental embroideries, carvings, armor, and swords, and last but not least, "a splendid

palanquin which cost the Chinese equivalent of 1,000 guineas. It was presented to him by the late Dowager Empress of China, and is constructed of solid ebony inlaid with gold and precious stones." In this palanquin, Robinson comes on the stage to perform his bullet-catching feat, supposed to be a replica of a similar adventure when he was attacked by "Boxers" in China. This is Herrmann's old trick, with an Oriental setting. Some years ago, a German-American wizard, Prof. Mingus, invented a method of catching live gold fish on the end of a line fixed to an ordinary bamboo fishing rod. The line being cast in the air, a gold fish appeared dangling upon the hook. The fish was then thrown into a bowl of water and shown to the audience. Several fish were caught in this manner. Robinson adopted this trick with great success. Pestered to death for an explanation of the mystery by his journalistic friends, he finally condescended to explain (?) it. He thus described it in the *News of the World*, Holloway, England, April 9, 1905:

"Anyone may know how Chung does the goldfish trick, but it does not follow that having been told one can do it. When Chung Ling Soo makes casts in the air with his rod and line, little Suce Seen, the Celestial handmaiden, stands meekly some yards away, holding a glass bowl of water. The hook is a powerful magnet, and if one could examine the goldfish caught, one would detect pieces of metal attached to the bodies of the finny captures. The live goldfish repose in little Suce Seen's sleeve, and when a more than usually skillful cast brings the magnetic bait for a second into the interior of the girl's sleeve, a 'catch' has at once been effected, and the fish is seen dangling and wriggling in the air at the end of the line."

It is needless to remark that this is a *fish story*. Chung Ling Soo is romancing. The gold fish are concealed in the handle of the rod. The fish that appears on the hook at each cast of the line is an imitation affair of silk, which is hidden in the hollow lead sinker. A substitution is made, and the real fish thrown into the bowl by the conjurer. The dainty little Chinese maiden (Mrs. Robinson) has nothing more to do with the trick than the people in the audience. She merely holds the bowl and looks cute.

The following is a sample of some of the nonsense published

about Robinson, taken from the *Weekly Despatch*, April 9, 1905:

"Chung Ling Soo rose from the ranks, and his fame as a sorcerer penetrated to the Chinese Empress Dowager, who commanded him to court, where, after years of service, he was promoted to many Celestial honors, and ultimately the rank of Mandarin was bestowed upon him. His skin is yellow, his eyes are black and oblique, and his teeth are absolutely inky, as all true Celestials of rank should be." Any one acquainted with the art of stage "make-up" knows how easily these facial effects can be produced. There is even a black paste for the teeth. I don't doubt this much of the journalist's story—but the "Celestial honors" and the "rank of Mandarin"—shade of the illustrious Münchhausen preserve us! Poor old Ching Ling Foo, the original Chinaman, has doubtless devoted his ingenious rival and "foreign devil" to the innumerable hells of the Chinese Buddhists.

So much for the Oriental ancestry of my old friend, Billy Robinson, the "One Button Man" of the Celestial Empire (Theatre of London, England).

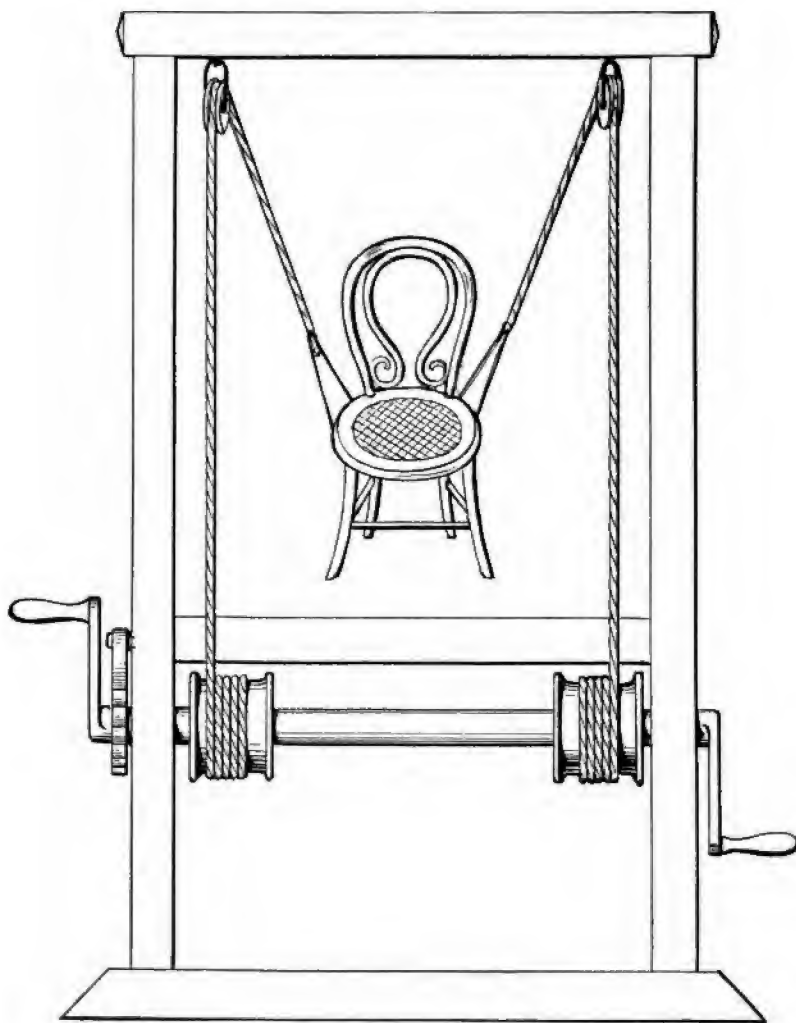
Robinson is the inventor of the clever stage illusion "Gone," which Herrmann exhibited, and which still forms one of the principal specialties of Kellar. I am indebted to my friend, Henry V. A. Parsell, for an accurate description of the trick, as at present worked by Mr. Kellar.

"At the rise of the curtain the stage is seen to have its rear part concealed by a second curtain and drapery, which, being drawn up, discloses a substantial framework. This framework, at the first glance, gives one the impression that it is that horrible instrument of death, the guillotine. As will be seen, it consists simply of two uprights, with a bar across the top and another a little below the middle. Just below the centre bar is a windlass, the two ropes of which pass through two pulleys fixed to the top bar. The machine stands out boldly against a black background, the distance from which is indeterminate.

"After the introduction of the fair maiden 'who is to be gone,' an ordinary looking bent wood chair is shown. The chair is then placed on the stage behind the framework, and by means of snap hooks the two ropes from the windlass are attached

to the side of the chair. The maiden is now seated in the chair and her skirt adjusted that it may not hang too low.

"A couple of assistants now work the windlass and elevate the chair and its occupant until they are well above the middle



"GONE," ROBINSON'S ILLUSION.

cross bar. One assistant then retires, the other remains with one hand resting against the side of the framework. The performer fires his pistol thrice, upon which the maiden vanishes and the



fragments of the chair fall to the ground. The illusion is produced by a black curtain which lies concealed behind the middle cross bar. When the pistol is fired, the assistant, whose hand is on the frame, presses a spring which releases this black curtain which is instantly drawn up in front of the suspended girl. At this same moment the girl undoes a couple of catches which allow the main part of the chair to drop. She, meanwhile, being seated on a false chair-bottom to which the ropes are attached."

As originally devised by Mr. Robinson, the illusion was based upon the Pepper ghost-show. Between the cross-bars of a slanting frame was a sheet of plate glass which, being invisible, left the lady on the chair in full view as long as the light fell upon her. A screen of the same color as the background was concealed above the curtain and placed at such an angle as to allow its reflection to pass out to the audience. The firing of the pistol was the signal for the assistant to turn a switch. The lady was then veiled in relative darkness while the screen was illuminated and its reflection on the plate glass concealed her from sight. Carrying around the country a big sheet of plate glass is not only an expensive luxury but a risky one, so the illusion was simplified in the manner described by Mr. Parsell.

## VI.

Buatier de Kolta was the greatest inventor of magic tricks and illusions since the days of Robert-Houdin. He was an absolutely original genius, who set at defiance Solomon's adage, "There is nothing new under the sun," by producing in rapid succession a series of brilliant feats that astounded the world of magic. I am indebted to my friend, Dr. W. Golden Mortimer, for facts concerning the career of de Kolta.

Joseph Buatier de Kolta was born in Lyons, France, in the year 1845. For centuries his father's people had inhabited the ancient palace of the Emperor Claudius. Each firstborn male of the Buatier family was given the Roman name. The subject of our sketch had a sister and two brothers, the latter, with himself, being set apart for the priesthood. His brother Claudius was not given to churchly ways, but the second brother actually entered upon the holy orders. Joseph was at college when he

first saw the wonders of magic as revealed by a strolling magician, and he became so fascinated with the possibilities of the art that he entered upon it at once.

He commenced his professional career at Geneva, Italy, in 1867, and shortly after became associated with his cousin, Julius Vidos de Kolta, who for fifteen years thereafter acted as his



BUATIER DE KOLTA

business manager. De Kolta was his mother's maiden name, adopted by her ancestors from one of the Hungarian provinces. Buatier de Kolta, as the magician was now known, traveled through Italy, where he presented a two hours' entertainment, consisting of original sleights with a multiplicity of small properties. In 1875 he opened in London, where a great furore was made with his flying cage, which he had introduced in Italy some two years earlier. Though de Kolta was not given to

mishaps, on the first presentation of his trick he threw the cage out into the audience, an accident which has been repeated by other performers.

He married Miss Alice Allen, in London, December 8, 1887. She afterwards traveled with him as his assistant, and acted as his business manager. In the year 1891, he made his first appearance in the United States by playing a four months' engage-



BUATIER DE KOLTA'S FLYING CAGE.

ment at the Eden Musée, New York City. On that occasion he introduced the large vanishing cage, which he intended as a satire on the flying cage because of the repeated supposition that a bird was killed at each performance of that trick, but he never liked the large cage and soon abandoned it. In 1903 he returned to this country, and opened at the Eden Musée, on September 15, where he played many months. Among other new tricks he

exhibited an improvement on the "rising cards," consisting in the continuous and successive rising of every card in a pack from out a glass tumbler; and a little sketch entitled "*la danse des millions*," in which the money-catching idea was elaborated. This number, delivered in Alexandrine verses with all the charm of a classic, was intended as a hit at the extravagance of the Panama Canal Company under the régime of De Lesseps and his associates.

On that occasion he introduced an absolutely new illusion, the effect of which was as follows: The curtain rose showing a platform in the center of the stage. It was about four feet square and eighteen inches high, with four legs. The conjurer appeared carrying a satchel in one hand. He informed the audience that he kept his wife in the receptacle. It was a convenient way of transporting her about with him. Opening the satchel, he took therefrom a die about six inches square, remarking that his consort was concealed within it. This he placed on the platform. After arranging two open fans on the back of the platform he touched a spring, whereupon the die opened to about two and a half feet square. Presto!—he lifted up the die and his wife appeared on the platform, sitting cross-legged like a Turkish lady on a divan.

The secret of this surprising illusion died with Buatier de Kolta. His wife refused to reveal it after his death.

From New York de Kolta went to New Orleans to play an engagement at the Orpheum Theatre. In that city he died of acute Bright's disease on October 7, 1903. The body was taken to London for burial.

Among the better known tricks and illusions invented by de Kolta may be mentioned the following: The flying bird cage (1873); the vanishing lady (1889); flowers from a paper cone (1886); the cocoon and living pictures (1887); and his disappearance, at the top of a twenty-one-foot ladder set upright against a bridge, in full light; soup plate and handkerchiefs; the decanters and flying handkerchiefs; multiplying billiard balls; production of a large flag on a staff; new ink and water trick, etc.

In conjunction with J. Nevil Maskelyne, he invented the "Black Art, or the Mahatmas Outdone." It has been exposed by the *Strand*, February, 1903, as follows:

"It is necessary for the benefit of those who have never seen an act of this kind to explain that everything is performed in a dark chamber—either the whole stage or a chamber fitted up in the center of it—draped entirely in black—sides, back, floor, and ceiling. The hall is placed almost in darkness, the only lights being a set of sidelights and footlights, which are turned toward the audience with reflectors behind, making it impossible for eyes to penetrate into the darkness beyond them. Everything used in the chamber is white, even the performer's dress, forming a contrast necessary to the illusion.

"The séance is usually commenced by the production of tables and goblets from space. In fact, everything required is mysteriously obtained from apparent nothingness. The performer, usually dressed in an Eastern costume, all of white, enters the empty chamber, and, requiring a wand, raises his hand, when one comes floating into it. He next taps the floor at the left side of the chamber and a small table suddenly appears. This he repeats at the right side, with the same result. He now taps one of the tables and a large goblet appears upon it in the same mysterious manner. This also he repeats at the other table, having now two tables several yards apart, with a goblet upon each. The whole are brought forward for inspection and replaced within the chamber. The performer takes one of the goblets, raises it, turns it over and around in several ways, and it is seen that the other is going through exactly the same movements without anyone being near it. The performer replaces his goblet upon the table; but the other remains suspended alone in mid-air, and the performer places a large ring over it and around it, showing wires or any other connection to be absent. He brings it forward and again hands it for examination, but on regaining it does not take it to the table, for by a wave of his hand the table comes dancing out to him and on receiving the goblet dances back to its original position. He next proceeds to borrow several watches and other articles of jewelry, which he takes into the chamber and places in the goblet on the

right. They are clearly seen to drop from his hand from several inches above; he shows his hands empty and immediately rushes across to the other goblet, brings it forward, and allows the audience themselves to take out all the jewelry which was placed in the right goblet only a moment previous. Having finished with these articles, they disappear as mysteriously and quickly as they appeared.

"The next illusion performed is the production from space of a live lady's bust suspended in a frame. The performer raises his wand and a large picture-frame suddenly hangs itself upon



"BLACK ART"—SOME OF ITS MYSTERIES.

it. This is brought for examination, then placed in the center of the chamber, where it remains suspended in mid-air and sets up a swinging motion by itself. It is then covered momentarily with an Eastern rug, and when removed, a lady, devoid of legs, whose body completely fills the frame, is seen swinging with it. The 'live picture' is covered momentarily, and when the covering is withdrawn a large Union Jack is seen to have taken the place of the lady, who has vanished.

"The performer proceeds next with a decapitation act, in which a lady is beheaded in full view of the audience. At a wave of his hand a lady appears, and hands to him her own gruesome means of execution, a large, glittering sabre, which he takes,

and with one swing cuts her head clean off where she stands. Catching the head as it falls, he places a pair of wings at the back of it, when it becomes a flying cherub, and immediately soars all about the chamber, finally returning to his outstretched hand. He then removes the wings and replaces the head upon the lady's shoulders, restoring her to life, for which kindness she quickly embraces him and vanishes. Wishing to get another such share of her favors, the performer endeavors to bring her back by magic aid, but is surprised by the appearance of a grinning ghost, whose whole body consists of a skull, with a moving jaw,



INVISIBLE ATTENDANT PRODUCING  
THE TABLE.



THE SWINGING BUST  
EXPLAINED.

draped with a white sheet. He catches it, and detaching its skull brings it forward for a closer scrutiny, the jaw moving all the time and the sheet dancing about alone. He then throws the skull into the air and it is seen no more.

"The séance is generally concluded by an invisible flight, the vanishing performer immediately reappearing amongst the audience. He takes the dancing sheet and entirely covers himself with it, standing in the center of the chamber, taking great care to drape himself in such a manner as to show the shape of his body. In a few seconds the sheet collapses, and before it has time to reach the ground a shout is heard in the back of the



hall; the audience turning around naturally are surprised to see the performer standing amongst them, smilingly bowing in acknowledgment of the applause which greets him.

"As before mentioned, the whole of this takes place in darkness, obtained by the chamber being draped in black velvet and the floor covered with black felt. The brightness of the lights turned towards the audience, contrasting with the denseness of the black behind, dazzles the eye to such an extent that it cannot discern anything in the chamber that is not white or of a very light color. The stage is all arranged before the act, and



DECAPITATION.

Showing the girl's head covered with a black hood—The girl acting for the head falling to her knees.

the tables are in their respective places, but cannot be seen on account of their being draped with black velvet. The goblets, frame, lady, ghost, etc., are all placed in readiness behind a black screen, also draped. None of this can be seen while they are behind the lights, if kept covered in black, no matter how near to the front they are placed. But how do they float about and appear so mysteriously? An assistant is within the chamber, dressed in black velvet throughout, with black gloves and mask, covering all signs of white about him and making him perfectly invisible. He wears no boots, and the felt



upon the floor deadens the sound of all his movements. He it is who really produces all the articles. When the performer stretches his hand out for the wand, the assistant brings it from behind the screen and hands it to him with a floating movement. As the performer taps the floor he immediately pulls away the black covering and the table instantly appears to view. The goblets are painted black inside, allowing him to hold them at the back with his fingers inside, unnoticed. After the tables are both produced he places the goblets upon them at the right moment with one hand while he pulls off the velvet with the other. The exposition is so quick and sudden that nothing suspicious can be noticed. The turning of the goblet is also the work of the invisible assistant, and is quickly changed from one hand to another when the ring is being passed over it. The watches, etc., are not placed in the goblet as they appear to be, but dropped behind it into the assistant's hands, who takes them over to the other while the performer is exhibiting his empty hands. The picture-frame is also handed by the assistant, and when it is apparently placed in mid-air is really passed to the assistant, who quickly hangs it up. When it is covered the lady steps from behind the screen to the frame, and stands upon a swing which nearly reaches to the floor behind it, and catches hold of the frame sides; the assistant draws away the velvet which draped her, and keeps the swing in motion. The frame is attached to the wires of this swing. The lady is dressed in white to the waist, which exactly reaches the bottom of the frame. Below the frame she is dressed in black velvet. When the frame is again covered she steps back behind the screen while the assistant fits the Union Jack in the frame. In the decapitation act there are two ladies, one dressed all in white, the other standing behind her dressed in black, with her head covered by a black hood. When the performer swings the sabre the assistant covers the white lady's head with a black velvet hood, at the same time pulling the hood quickly from the other lady's head, who immediately falls to her knees. The illusion looks perfect—a body apparently standing without a head and the head apparently falling. When the wings are put on she flaps them by means of a wire and runs round the cham-

her, stooping at intervals, so as to take an irregular course. The beheaded lady is restored by exactly the reverse method, and she disappears behind the screen. The ghost is danced about on a



the performer takes the ghost of the lady and holds it in the air, and it is the latter who is then dancing "round" the performer running around to

the back of the hall meanwhile, where he waits to see the sheet drop. The assistant, allowing time for this, simply lets go the top of the sheet, and, of course, cannot be seen behind it. The



CAZENEUVE PERFORMING A TRICK.

performer runs in before it has time to reach the ground, his invisible flight and immediate reappearance greatly astonishing the spectators."

## VII.

Cazeneuve, better known as *le commandeur* Cazeneuve, the great card expert and magician, was born in Toulouse in 1840. He adopted magic, after witnessing a performance of that original genius, Bosco. His chivalric title (commander of the imperial order of Medjidie) was conferred upon him by the Sultan of Turkey, with whom he was a favorite. At the Court of Russia he and his charming wife made a great sensation with the second-sight trick. When the Franco-Prussian war broke out, Cazeneuve returned to Toulouse and raised two companies of soldiers, one of which was composed entirely of theatrical people. He served as captain of the 1st regiment of Tirailleurs d'Elite, under the command of Colonel Riu, and fought bravely for France. After peace was declared he prepared a new programme of magic and toured Europe and the Americas. He has a handsome home in his native city of Toulouse, where he has collected many rare curios. In the year 1905, Cazeneuve was touring Algeria with a magic show. He is a member of several scientific societies, and manifests great interest in physics.

I first saw Carl Hertz in Baltimore at the old vaudeville theatre "across the bridge," some twenty years ago. I remember him as a clever, good-looking young fellow, possessed of considerable dash, and very neat in the performance of card tricks. His specialty was the "bird-cage trick," which he did to perfection. He was born in San Francisco, of German parents. His first manager was M. de Frère. Hertz has traveled extensively in the Orient. With the bird-cage trick he puzzled the best informed fakirs of India. In Borneo he met with a most romantic adventure. He is probably the only man who has had to offer himself as a burnt-offering to escape an amorous Princess. He was giving a series of magical entertainments before a Malay Sultan and Court, and not only succeeded in fascinating the yellow-skinned monarch, but his daughter as well. The young princess proposed marriage to the conjurer. "On Mr. Hertz informing the lady, through an interpreter, that he was already wedded, she replied that made no difference to her, as she would rule his other ladies. Here was a fix. However, with the con-

nivance of the British Vice-Consul, Mr. Hertz took the place of his lawful spouse in the Phoenix illusion, and jumping into the blazing caldron waved an affectionate adieu to the astonished and dismayed Princess. Mrs. Hertz had to keep up the delusion by weeping copiously while her husband was being conveyed to the coast in a basket."

In the Sandwich Islands, on one occasion, a chief leaped upon the stage where Hertz was performing and began worshipping him as a god. How very real must have been the effect of Hertz's magic upon the untutored mind of that simple native.

In the year 1904, a troupe of Hindoo jugglers, acrobats and snake charmers were brought to the United States to entertain lovers of the marvelous at the St. Louis Exposition. Among them was a man with an unpronounceable name, whom the management dubbed "Alexander." I met the dusky necromancer at Martinka's in the summer of 1904. He went about the streets of New York garbed in his rich Oriental costume. The street gamins always followed him from his hotel to the Palace of Magic and stood about the doorway in crowds, awaiting in breathless astonishment some feat of wizardry. But the impassive Hindoo paid no attention to his youthful admirers, but went on blowing wreaths of smoke from Egyptian cigarettes, and making purchases of magical apparatus with which to astonish the natives of his beloved India. Taking magic tricks to India is like carrying coals to Newcastle. But Alexander had a very high opinion of Occidental conjuring, and fully realized the fact that the sorcerers of the West, aided by all the resources of modern science, were the superiors of the Hindoo fakirs, except perhaps in one particular—feats of hypnotism and apparent death. I saw Alexander, in Martinka's little back shop, support a couple of heavy iron weights, which were fastened at the ends of a cord, upon his eyelids. The cord rested on the lids, the weights dangling at the ends of the string. The pressure upon the eyeballs must have been tremendous. Alexander presented Dr. Ellison with a wand—the thigh-bone of a sacred simian from the famous monkey temple of India. The bone was inscribed with cabalistic characters and Sanskrit sentences. The monkey is famous for playing

tricks, and the thigh-bone of a sacred monkey consequently ought to make an admirable mystic wand for a conjurer. The doctor prizes this unique relic very highly, and is thinking of building a shrine of Benares copper for its reception. In the future, crowds of wandering wizards will doubtless make pilgrimages to this shrine to gaze in ecstasy at the holy relic, just as crowds of East Indians visit the temple where Buddha's wisdom tooth is displayed for the delectation of the faithful.

## VIII.

In the year 1894 there flashed on the theatrical horizon of Europe an eccentric gentleman conjurer, who performed with a mask on his face, advertising himself as *L'Homme Masqué* (the Masked Man).

"Who is he?" inquired the *quid nuncs* of the vaudeville theatres.

Nobody seemed to know. Had the Man in the Iron Mask, celebrated by Voltaire and Alexander Dumas, come to life again?

"What does he wear a mask for?" asked the public.

"To hide his aristocratic features," replied the manager of *L'Homme Masqué*. "He wishes to remain incognito."

Eventually he permitted his name to leak out. It was Marquis d'O. "But 'O' is not a name," cried the *quid nuncs*. "It is a letter, an exclamation of surprise or terror." "Not so fast," remarked the Dryasdusts. "There was a Marquis d'O who lived in the seventeenth-century. He was a noted duelist and gambler, but that did not prevent him from being a favorite with Henri III of France. Possibly *L'Homme Masqué* is a descendant of the famous nobleman of the old régime. He is unquestionably a Frenchman, for he speaks like a native."

The masked man refused to further reveal his identity. In one respect he resembled the favorite of the Valois King. He was familiar with cards. After losing 800,000 francs at Monte Carlo, he took up magic as a profession and made his début, March, 1894. I have ascertained that the Marquis is a native of Peru, South America. His real name I do not know. The "O" perhaps is a *nom de théâtre*. Again, it may be an abbrevia-

tion of Olivarez. Mr. Downs writes as follows in the Sphinx, January, 1903, concerning the mysterious marquis:

"*L'Homme Masqué* (Marquis d'O) and myself are especially engaged to give a series of magical performances at the Casino Theatre, Spa, Belgium, Nov. 15 to Dec. 31, 1902. The Marquis is a remarkably clever magician of the non-apparatus school and gives an hour and thirty minutes' performance, changing his show each evening. He uses only cards, handkerchiefs, flowers, eggs and other small objects for his illusions. He is eminently original and possesses a great personality. He is a decided sensation in the theatrical world. His success has been so pronounced that he has had many imitators who have donned the mask and traded on his reputation. The Society of Magicians in Hamburg presented him with a valuable gold-tipped wand set with diamonds. Like Robert-Houdin, the Marquis presents his audiences with many charming souvenirs, some of them of considerable value, such as cigarette cases, cigars, bouquets, etc. He is very popular in aristocratic circles. When in London, he received as high as £20 for a private entertainment and was invited everywhere."

To keep the public guessing is the particular business of a conjurer, but to keep people guessing as to your identity as well as your tricks, caps the climax in the art of mystery mongering. Imagine the Sphinx wearing a mask. This business of a wizard disguising his features with a black mask is a piece of sublime audacity. *Vive le Marquis d'O!* Is it not a pity that such an act cannot be copyrighted? Think of some really original idea and produce it on the stage and immediately hundreds of imitators will spring up like mushrooms in a single night. Not only will they copy your act, but your patter as well.

Two of our foremost American conjurers, Downs and Houdini, can testify to this fact. T. Nelson Downs, the "King of Coins," a native of Marshaltown, Iowa, invented a number of original sleights with coins, which he embodied in an act known as the Miser's Dream. A brilliant success was the result, whereupon a legion of imitators, billing themselves as Coin Kings, sprang up everywhere. Downs, however, remains the unapproachable manipulator of coins; his imitators have gone

to the wall, one after the other. Downs' act is really unique. He is also a fine performer with cards. Edward VII of England, who has a penchant for entertainments of magic and mystery, had Downs give private séances for him, and was charmed with the American's skill.

#### IX.

A word or two here concerning that brilliant entertainer, Harry Houdini, whose handcuff act is the sensation of two continents.

Mr. Houdini, whose real name is Weiss, was born April 6, 1873, in Appleton, Wisconsin. He began his career as an entertainer when but nine years of age, doing a contortion and trapeze act in Jack Hoffler's "five cent" circus in Appleton. His mother took him away from the sawdust arena and apprenticed him to a locksmith. Here he was initiated into the mysteries of locks and keys, and laid the foundation of his great handcuff act. Locksmithing, despite the fact that King Louis XVI of France worked at it as an amateur, possessed no charms for the youthful Houdini. To use his own expression, "One day I made a bolt for the door, and never came back to my employer." Again he went with a circus, where he acted as a conjurer, a clown and a ventriloquist. He made a specialty of the rope-tying business and performed occasionally with handcuffs, but without sensational results. Finally the circus landed in Rhode Island and opened up in a town where Sunday performances were forbidden by law, but were greatly desired by a large section of the population. As the fine was light, the proprietor ran the risk, and gave a show on the Sabbath. A summons followed, and each member of the troupe was fined. As Houdini epigrammatically put it: "The manager couldn't find the fine, so we all found ourselves in confinement." Houdini was locked up in a cell with a number of side-show freaks, the fat lady, the living skeleton, and the German giant. The fat lady was too wide for the compartment, the giant too long. With tears in their eyes they implored Houdini to pick the lock and let them out. Finally the young conjurer consented, and dexterously picked the lock, whereupon he and his companions



marched out of the jail in triumph, and paraded down the main street of the town in Indian file, to the great amusement of the populace. Houdini was rearrested on the charge of jail-break-



HARRY HOUDINI  
(The Handcuff King)

ing, but the judge let him off with a reprimand. This event decided his career. He became a "Handcuff King."

His salary at the Alhambra Theatre, London, was \$300 a week. One week at St. Petersburg, Russia, netted him over \$2,000. He appeared before royalty.

The handcuff act when exhibited with the proper *mise en scène* is certainly very mystifying and calculated to produce a profound impression on the minds of susceptible people. Taking the cue from the Davenport Brothers, Houdini might have



HARRY HOUDINI, IN HANDCUFFS AND CHAINS

advertised himself as a spirit medium, thereby creating a great sensation. But he preferred not to play the charlatan. I am not personally acquainted with his method of working the trick, therefore I express no opinion on the subject, except to say that the locks of the handcuffs are *picked* with a key of some

kind which is adroitly secreted about the person of the performer; or some soft piece of iron or copper wire which can be converted into a skeleton key. In the event of his being stripped naked (as often occurs in the case of Houdini) the key is probably hidden in the nose, ear, mouth, or bushy hair of the Handcuff King—or else slipped to him by a confederate, or concealed in a pocket in the drapery of the cabinet. I quote the following from the *Strand Magazine* (Sept., 1903):

“For a man fettered with handcuffs, leg-irons, and chains to free himself in less time than it has taken to fasten him has



FIG. 1.—THE PERFORMER FASTENED WITH SIX PAIRS OF HANDCUFFS.

long been so mystifying a performance that many people have acquired the impression that it bordered on the supernatural. The secret is, however, like many of the best tricks ever invented, in reality a surprisingly simple one.

“In the first place, it must be remembered that handcuffs such as are used by Scotland Yard are constructed with spring-locks, which are fastened or released by means of a key, or some article which answers the same purpose, which pulls back the spring. Without the aid of such a key it is impossible for any human being to free himself from the regulation handcuffs employed by the police. And herein lies the whole secret

—the performer *has* a key, or rather several keys. All his ingenuity is exercised in concealing these about his person, or inside the cabinet to which he retires to release himself after being, to all appearances, helplessly secured.

"Some of these keys are concealed in the framework of the cabinet, which is generally constructed of piping, having additional pieces which appear to be essential portions of the framework, but which in reality are only intended to hold the keys. Other keys the performer keeps disposed about his person in



FIG. 2—THE HANDKERCHIEF AND KEY  
DRAWN FROM THE WAISTCOAT.



FIG. 3—UNLOCKING THE HANDCUFFS  
WITH THE KEY.

sundry small pockets especially made for the purpose, and so arranged that he is able to place his hand upon some one or other of them in whatever position he may be. The best places for concealment are—first, a pocket between the knees, to permit the key to be reached when the performer is fastened in a crouched position; secondly, a pocket about six inches up inside the leg of the trousers; thirdly, a key carried in the hip pocket of the trousers, for use when pinioned with the arms behind the back; and finally, a small pocket inside the top of the waistcoat, or wherever it may be found convenient.



"Let us now turn to the photographs, which have been especially taken for this article, and which render the whole proceeding very clear. In Fig. 1 the performer is fastened with six pairs of handcuffs. In such a position it seems impossible that he can free himself; but by putting his hands over his head and down his coat collar he has caught the end of a silk handkerchief thrust into the breast of his waistcoat, to which a key



FIG 4—METHOD OF USING THE KEY WHEN OUT OF REACH OF THE FINGERS.

is attached. Fig. 2 shows the handkerchief and key drawn to the front; while Fig. 3 shows the key inserted in the lock.

"Fig. 4 shows the method employed when the position is such that it is impossible, owing to the awkwardness of the attitude, to pull the lock back. A piece of violin string is made into a loop and kept inside the cabinet. When it is impossible to draw the key, and with it the lock-spring, with the fingers, the loop is put over the key, the heel of the boot placed

in the other end of the loop, and the lock is then easily drawn back. After one pair has been opened the others follow as a matter of course.

"Figs. 5 and 6 show another position, the key this time being obtained from the waistcoat. Fig. 7 shows one of the most difficult positions in which it is possible to be placed. The silk handkerchief shown is just peeping from the waistcoat, and is brought out by the aid of the tongue, it being possible to draw out a good silk by licking it. In Fig. 8 the performer has rolled



FIGS. 5 AND 6—ANOTHER POSITION, THE KEY BEING OBTAINED FROM THE WAISTCOAT.

over and obtained a good hold of the handkerchief, which, by a quick jerk of the head, he throws over his back, and eventually gets hold of it with his hands, as shown in Fig. 9. If the key falls to the floor he rolls over and picks it up, the rattle of the handcuffs hiding the sound of the falling key. His next movement is to free his hands from his feet, which he does in the manner already described. The key for this position can also be obtained from the leg of the trousers.

"Fig. 10 shows the implements of torture and the condition of the performer's wrists after an exhibition. The special keys



FIG. 7—ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT POSITIONS.  
(The performer is drawing out the handkerchief with his tongue.)



FIG. 8—THE HANDKERCHIEF AND KEY DRAWN OUT.



FIG. 9—THE HANDKERCHIEF THROWN OVER THE BACK AND THE KEY CAUGHT  
BY THE HAND.



are split with a saw about half an inch down, to allow for variation in the sizes of various locks (Fig. 11). It should be understood that an expert, when about to give a performance, inquires what position it is intended to place him in. He then causes, as an introduction, a few pairs of his own handcuffs to be placed on his wrists, and while freeing himself from these



FIG. 10—THE PERFORMER AND HIS IMPLEMENTS.  
(Showing the Condition of the Wrists after an Exhibition.)

in his cabinet he arranges his keys to suit the position in which he will next be placed. Other implements besides keys are also used: a piece of bent wire is often quite sufficient. Most experts are also conjurers, and 'palm' the key, especially in the case of a nude test, when they are stripped and locked up in a cell; or they make use of a concealing key, which is made telescopic, the handle being constructed to close down the side of



the key, and the whole being fixed under the toes by a piece of shoemaker's wax and detached when inside the cell.

"Although, when the secret is explained, it seems very easy to accomplish, it must be understood that it is necessary for a successful performer to possess very hard, strong wrists and abundance of finger strength, and to be a man of some resource. It is almost impossible for any person to fasten an expert securely unless he himself understands the secret of the method of escape, and even then he may not be successful. On one occasion a performer underwent a severe test by a person who

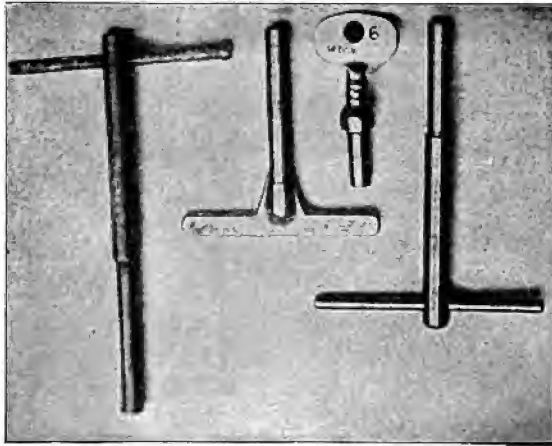


FIG. II—VARIOUS KINDS OF KEYS

understood the secret, and therefore did not use any keys whatever, but by a very ingenious method overcame the efforts of the gentleman in question to fasten him. He obtained some very small gold-filled wire and made it into the form of a wire ring, which was partly covered by a broad gold one, to which the wire ring was attached. Thus prepared he underwent the test, unwrapping the wire ring when in the cabinet. Needless to state, in a very short time he was free.

"Handcuffs are sometimes brought to fetter the performer with the locks plugged or otherwise tampered with. But it is the performer's own fault if he is trapped. It is a very easy matter to tamper with the locks—a few lead pellets dropped

down the barrel will effectually prevent the lock from being drawn. This method has often been attempted, but not successfully.

"Now that the methods have been explained and illustrated, it will be very easily perceived that there is nothing supernatural about the secret of handcuff manipulation."

Houdini is not only a Handcuff King, but a skillful performer with cards. When too many imitators shall have made his specialty a drug on the market, he can take to some other branch of conjuring. He has a very fine trunk illusion which he often combines with his handcuff act. For seven years past he has been collecting data for an extensive biographical encyclopedia of magicians. In his travels on the continent of Europe he has visited the homes and haunts of famous conjurers of the past and secured valuable material for his prospective book. Thanks to this interesting man, photographs of the tombs of Robert-Houdin and Bosco have been made, and considerable light thrown on their careers. In a letter to me, October 9, 1905, he says: "When in Russia, I searched in vain for the grave of the fascinating Pinetti—that prestidigitateur *par excellence* of the eighteenth century—but, alas, my labors were not rewarded. But in St. Petersburg I picked up an exceedingly rare portrait of Pinetti, which I prize highly and which will form the frontispiece to my book on magicians." Houdini is a reincarnation of Sir Walter Scott's Old Mortality, who went about furbishing up the tombstones of the illustrious dead of his faith. When at home (New York City), Harry Houdini lives among his books and curios. He has also a handsome farm in Massachusetts. Houdini's brother, under the stage name of Hardeen, is also a handcuff expert.

x.

In this review of magicians I have met, I must not fail to mention Charles Edwin Fields of the Royal Aquarium and Crystal Palace, London, England. This veteran of the wand was born in London, May 15, 1835, and received a good education at private academies in England and France. He has appeared before royalty and instructed hundreds of people in

the mystic art. In the days when magic literature was sparse, Prof. Fields obtained large sums of money from wealthy amateurs for the secrets of tricks. Alas, the golden age of wizardry has passed. Magic is an "open secret." The Professor's occupation is gone.

I come now to François de Villiers, the French illusionist, who is an excellent performer. He is able to invest the simplest parlor trick with a halo of interest, thanks to his wit and bonhomie. He was born in the Island of Malta, where Cagliostro went to work in the chemical laboratory of the Grand Commander Pinto. De Villiers when but a callow youth ran away from the parental home and joined a French circus which happened to be touring the Island of Malta. He wandered all over the continent of Europe with the knights of the sawdust circle, playing many parts, acrobat, clown and conjurer. Finally he took up magic as a profession.

De Villiers next drifted to India, where he became a subject of the British crown. Being of an adventurous nature, he joined a cavalry regiment and wore the khaki of the Queen. When his term of enlistment had expired, he went to Spain and fought valiantly under the banner of Don Carlos. Captured by the government forces, he was tried as a rebel and condemned to be shot, but his sentence was commuted to banishment, thanks to the timely intervention of the British Ambassador, to whom he had appealed for aid. De Villiers is now a naturalized citizen of the United States and his home is in New York City.

Ziska is a magician of ability and possessed of much originality. Assisted by Mr. King, he does an act in which magic is blended with comedy. It is entitled "The Magician and His Valet." The conjurer is very clever and the valet very clumsy, but no exposés of the tricks are made; Mr. Ziska is too much of an artist to permit that.

J. Warren Keane is a clever manipulator of cards and billiard balls. He gives a pleasing act of magic.

Prof. Barney Ives is possessed of great originality. Some of his inventions have become famous. In this respect he is a rival to the celebrated Henry Hardin.

De Biere and Stillwell are conjurers who are fast rising into prominence. Stillwell is a handkerchief manipulator.

Next in line we have Malini, Fred Hurd, Hal Merton and Maro, all of them clever magicians. Hurd's rabbit and duck trick has to be seen to be appreciated. Maro is not only an excellent illusionist, but a musician and a crayon artist. Merton, a favorite in the lyceum field, was at one time the editor of "Mahatma." Malini's forte is cards, and he devotes most of his time to giving drawing-room and club entertainments. Of late years he has made London his home. Among the clever amateurs I have met may be mentioned Mr. Guy L. Baker, of Buffalo, N. Y., and Mr. LeRoy McCafferty and Mr. John J. Allen, of Washington, D. C. Mr. Baker is an excellent drawing-room conjurer and the originator of a novel method of working the rising card trick *à la* de Kolta, by means of a clockwork apparatus in the body of a small table. Mr. McCafferty is good at hanky-panky, particularly with billiard balls; and Mr. Allen, an ardent student of the art of deception, bids fair to become a good entertainer.

Ere I bring this chapter to a close I must not neglect to pay a tribute to my old-time friend, Dr. Leonard Caughey, of Baltimore, Md., the finest amateur conjurer, rope-tying and cabinet medium I have ever met. A dentist by profession, he devoted his leisure time to magic. He died some fifteen years ago in Washington, D. C. His cousin, Mr. Charles M. Caughey, also an amateur prestidigitateur, is at present United States Consul to Palermo, Sicily, the birthplace of Cagliostro. From Dr. Caughey I received my first scientific instruction in the art of palming and mediumistic marvels. I owe him a debt of gratitude. In my little book "Hours With the Ghosts" I have described some of my adventures with this admirable amateur necromancer, who has passed from the lesser to the Greater Mysteries. Long before Professor Hoffmann had written his great treatise on "Modern Magic," Dr. Caughey was thoroughly initiated into all branches of magic, something unusual in those days, and was giving splendid entertainments for churches, lyceums, etc. A fine mechanic, he made most of his apparatus, some of it of a very elaborate character. I imported Hoffmann's

book from England and showed it to him. He was paralyzed with astonishment at the revelations contained in the volume and exclaimed, "The golden days of magic are over." The *Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods) has come! The world will be as full of magicians as the Jersey coast is of mosquitoes. The palmy days of Herrmann, Houdin and Heller are ended." His prophecy has been more or less fulfilled. The vail of Isis is lifted and the mysteries of magic laid open to all who care to delve in its literature and inform themselves. Alas, unscrupulous professionals have contributed to this state of things by exposing tricks on the stage for the benefit of the public at large. This is indeed killing outright the goose that lays the golden eggs. Initiate the *hoi polloi* into the secrets of the cult, and magic will soon be relegated to the parlor as an after-dinner amusement, unless some absolutely original genius like Robert-Houdin or de Kolta arises and recreates the art. The Society of British Magicians, known as "The Magic Circle of Great Britain," expels a member who wilfully exposes any magical trick or illusion on the stage. The Society of American Magicians comes out strongly against the reprehensible practice of stage exposés, but as yet has taken no steps to expel members who offend against the law. But that will doubtless come in time.

## THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX.

"Thus they placed Sphinxes before the gates of their temples, meaning by that to say that their theology contained all the secrets of wisdom under an enigmatic form."—MARIETTE: *Voyage dans la Haute-Egypte*, Vol. II, p. 9.

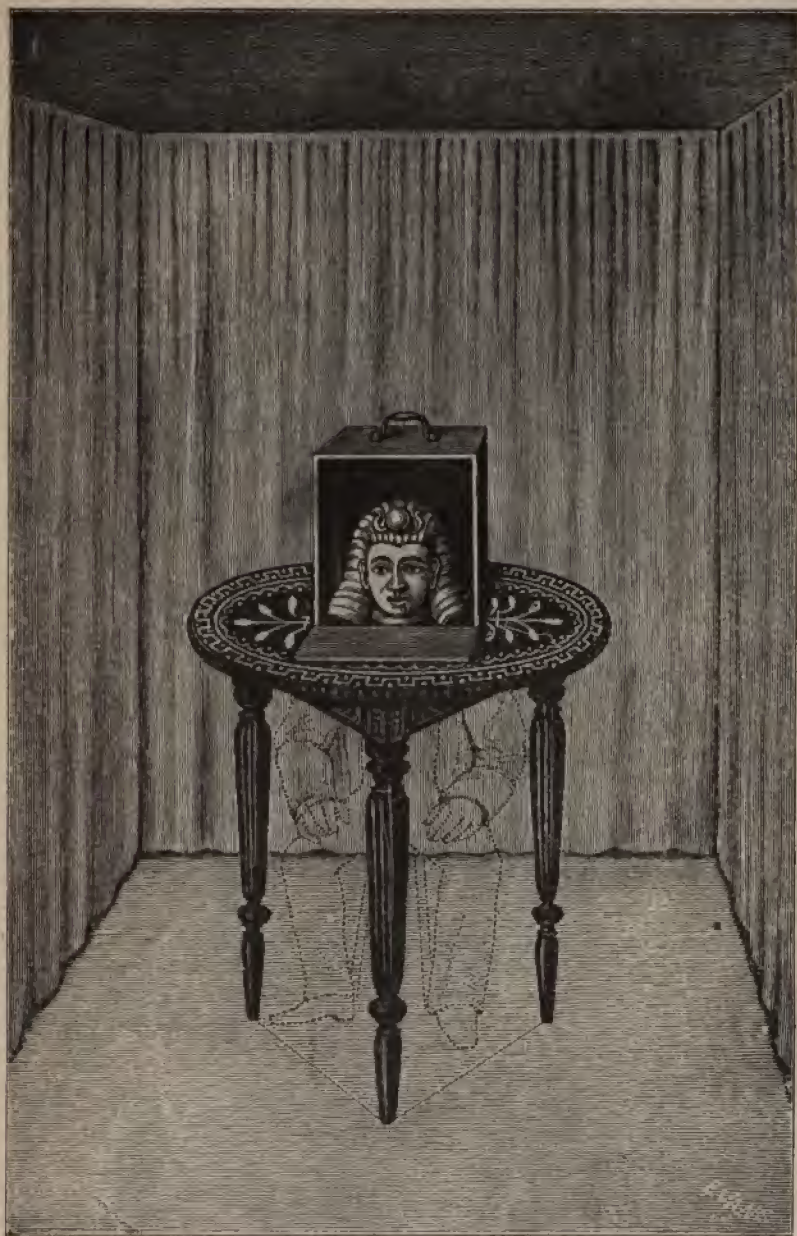
### I.

What is the meaning of this Egyptian Temple, transplanted from the banks of the Nile to prosaic London? The smoke and grime have attacked it and played sad havoc with its sandstone walls, painted with many hieroglyphics. The fog envelops it with a spectral embrace. No Sphinxes guard its portal. Alas, its glories have departed! But stop a bit! There is a gentleman in evening dress, with a tall hat pushed well back from his forehead, sitting in a small box-like receptacle on one side of the colossal entrance, his face framed in by a small window; and another man, similarly attired, standing at an iron wicket leading into the sanctum sanctorum. The temple, then, is guarded by two up-to-date, flesh-and-blood Sphinxes in swallow-tail coats and opera hats. Ah me, what a travesty on the human-headed monsters of the land of Mizraim. See the long line of worshipers waiting to obtain admission to the Mysteries. Has the cult of Isis and Osiris been revived? The devotees deposit coins with Sphinx No. 1 and receive from him yellow tickets in exchange, the presentation of which to Sphinx No. 2 permits their entrance into the temple.

What does it all mean?

Dear reader, this is Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, London, and the people are crowding to see a conjuring exhibition by Colonel Stodare. His Sphinx trick is the great attraction.

Stodare is dust long ago, and the Sphinx no longer a mystery. Its riddle has been solved.



THE SPHINX ILLUSION.  
(From the English edition of Hoffmann's *Magic*. London, 1877.)

But let us rehearse its history.

The Sphinx illusion, which has formed the basis of nearly all tricks performed by the aid of looking-glasses, was invented by Thomas Tobin, of the Polytechnic Institution, London. Colonel Stodare, the conjurer, had the honor of first introducing it to the world. The "London Times" (October 19, 1865) describes it as follows:

"Most intricate is the problem proposed by Colonel Stodare, when, in addition to his admirable feats of ventriloquism and legerdemain, he presents to his patrons a novel illusion called the 'Sphinx.' Placing upon an uncovered table a chest similar in size to the cases commonly occupied by stuffed dogs or foxes, he removes the side facing the spectators, and reveals a head attired after the fashion of an Egyptian Sphinx. To avoid the suspicion of ventriloquism, he retires to a distance from the figure, supposed to be too great for the practice of that art, taking his position on the borderline of the stalls and the area, while the chest is on the stage. Thus stationed, he calls upon the Sphinx to open its eyes, which it does—to smile, which it does also, though the habitual expression of its countenance is most melancholy, and to make a speech, which it does also, this being the miraculous part of the exhibition. Not only with perspicuity, but with something like eloquence, does it utter some twenty lines of verse; and while its countenance is animated and expressive, the movement of the lips, in which there is nothing mechanical, exactly corresponds to the sounds articulated.

"This certainly is one of the most extraordinary illusions ever presented to the public. That the speech is spoken by a human voice there is no doubt, but how is a head to be contrived which, being detached from anything like a body, confined in a case, which it completely fills, and placed on a bare-legged table, will accompany a speech, that apparently proceeds from its lips, with a strictly appropriate movement of the mouth, and a play of the countenance that is the reverse of mechanical? Eels, as we all know, can wriggle about after they have been chopped into half a dozen pieces; but a head that, like that of the Physician Douban, in the Arabian tales, pursues its eloquence after it has been severed from the body, scarcely comes within the reach of possibilities; unless, indeed, the old-fashioned assertion that 'King Charles walked and talked half an hour after his head was cut off,' is to be received, not as an illustration of defective punctuation, but as a positive historical statement.

"Davius might have solved the 'Anthropoglossus,' but Colonel Stodare presents us with a Sphinx that is really worthy of an Oedipus."

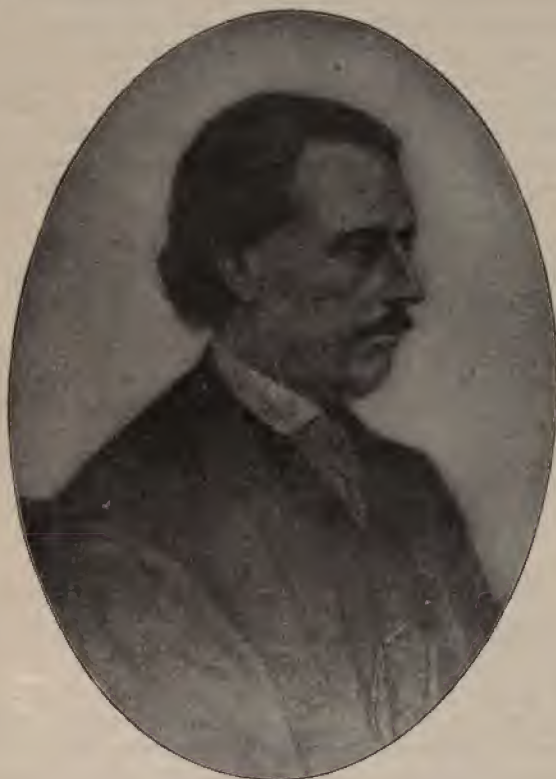
## II.

Mr. Alfred Thompson, the well known theatrical manager, attended one of Stodare's performances at the Egyptian Hall, and was lucky enough to penetrate the secret of the Sphinx. In



an article contributed to the *New York Journal*, some twenty years ago, he writes:

"I happened to rise in my seat. In a moment the whole illusion was swept away, and all because of the lack of a silk handkerchief. As I stood up my eye caught, hovering between two of the table legs, the marks of two fingers, such marks as may often be seen on a mirror when the light falls at a certain angle upon it.



COLONEL STODARE.

"Those two finger marks, though close to the carpet, gave me the key to the riddle of the Sphinx. In my mental photograph I saw the confederate kneeling behind the table, his head passing through superposed apertures, one in the top of the table, the other in the bottom of the box. The figure was concealed from view by two mirrors of pure silver-plated glass, set at such an angle as to reflect either side of the room (on the stage) in such a way that what to the eye was evidently the back of the same room seen beneath and beyond the table, was really only a reproduction of those sides visible in the mirrors between the legs of the table.

"This Sphinx was the sensation of London for weeks following, and having occasion to go to Paris a few days later, I offered the secret to Robert-Houdin's successor, Hamilton, who, however, refused my terms until he knew the trick. This delay of his was much regretted by him, for some other speculator produced the secret some three months later and made a colossal sensation in Paris with his 'Decapite Parlant.'

"In the same year I introduced the illusion for the first time on the stage in the celebrated spectacle of 'Babil and Bijou' at Covent Garden Theatre. In the ballet of 'The Seasons' Mlle. Henriette Dor, one of the most poetical dancers ever seen, appeared as the White Rose, and I designed a large rose bud on its stalk, which, coming up through the bed of summer flowers, blossomed wide until from its open petals the beautiful Dor rose up, apparently materializing as she issued from the calix on the stalk. The ballet girls were so arranged in groups around three sides (not in front) as to aid the deception by their adjusted reflections in the mirrors.

"Practically it was the same trick—two mirrors at a right angle and a trap door. This curious trick was never improved on. It was added to and altered at the Polytechnic, where, among other adaptations of the same principle, was shown an animated tableau of Sir Joshua Reynolds' famous cherubs. Three cherubs' heads appeared in a moonlit sky, floating, and sang in sweet child voices the verses of an anthem.

"Curiously enough I met the original Sphinx not three years ago in the person of a business manager who had been Stodare's agent, and only three months back one of those very cherubs in Mr. Fred Solomon, the comedian, who was then a chorister at the Chapel Royal, and who was threatened with all sorts of tortures if he let the cat or the cherub out of the bag."

### III.

One of the best explanations of the Sphinx is given by Professor Hoffmann in his work on magic. I quote as follows from him:

"For the benefit of those who have never seen this illusion presented upon the stage, we will describe its effect a little more minutely. The Sphinx is always made a separate portion of the entertainment, as it is necessary to lower the curtain for a few moments before and after its appearance, in order to arrange and remove the necessary preparations. The curtain rises, and reveals a round or oval table, supported upon three slender legs, and utterly devoid of drapery. This stands in a curtained recess of ten or twelve feet square, open on the side towards the audience. The performer comes forward bearing a cloth covered box, fifteen to twenty inches square, and places it upon the table already mentioned. He then unlocks the box, the front of which drops down, so as to give a perfect view of the interior, in which is seen a head of Egyptian fashion, and colored in perfect imitation of life. The performer now retires to a position in the very midst of the audience, and raising his wand, says in a tone of command, 'Sphinx, awake!' The Sphinx slowly opens its eyes, looking first to the front with a strong

gaze; then, as if gradually gaining consciousness, to the one side and the other, the head moving slightly with the eyes. Questions are put by the performer to the head, and are answered by it, the play of the mouth and features being in perfect harmony with the sounds uttered. Finally, in answer to a query of the operator, the Sphinx declaims a neatly turned oracle in verse. This concludes the exhibition, and the performer closes the box. Should the audience call for an encore, the performer addresses them to the following or some similar effect:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am glad that the Sphinx has afforded you satisfaction, and I should be only too pleased to be able to indulge the desire which you kindly testify of seeing it again. Unfortunately, this is not possible. The charm by which I am enabled, as you have seen, to revivify for a space the ashes of an ancient Egyptian, who lived and died some centuries ago, lasts but for fifteen minutes. That time has now expired, and the head which has astonished you with its mysterious eloquence has again returned to its original dust.' As he speaks the last words, he again opens the box,

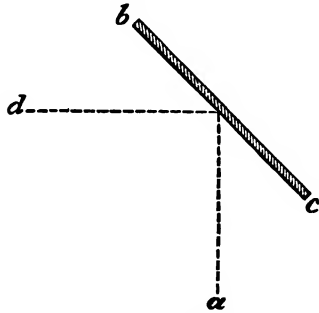


FIG. 1.

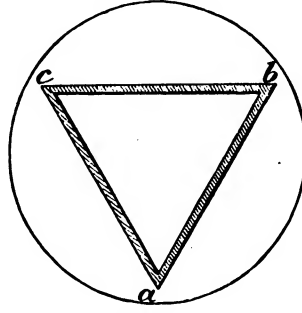


FIG. 2.

and the head is found to have disappeared, leaving in its place a handful of ashes.

"This singular illusion depends upon the well-known principle, common to optics as to mechanics, that the 'angle of reflection is equal to the angle of incidence.' Thus, if a person standing at the point *a*, in Fig. 1, look into a mirror placed in the position indicated by the line *bc*, he will see reflected, not himself, but whatever object may be placed at the point *d*. By an ingenious application of this principle a looking-glass may be used to conceal a given object behind it, while at the same time an image reflected in the glass may be made to represent what would be presumably seen if no glass were there, and thus prevent the presence of the mirror from being suspected. This is the secret of the Sphinx. The table, as already mentioned, has three legs, one in front, and one at each side. Between these legs the spectator sees apparently the curtains at the back of the recess, but really a reflection of the curtains at the sides. The space between the middle leg and that on either side is occupied by pieces of looking-glass (see Fig. 2, which represents a ground plan of the arrangements), extending from *a* to *b*, and *a* to *c*. The glass extends quite down to the floor, which is covered with cloth of the same material and color as the surrounding curtains. The spec-

tators, therefore, looking towards the table, see above it the curtains at the back, and below it the reflection of the curtains at the sides; which, however, if the relative angles are properly arranged, appears to be simply the continuation or lower portion of the curtains at the back. The illusion is perfect, and the spectator, from the position assigned to him, cannot possibly discover, by the evidence of his senses, that he is looking at any other than an ordinary bare-legged table, with the background visible in the usual way.

"The rest is a very simple matter. The person who is to represent the Sphinx is beforehand placed, duly attired, underneath the table. There is a trap in the table through which he can pass his head at the proper moment. This trap is a round piece of wood, covered to match the surface of the table, and working on a hinge on the side nearest to the audience. It has no spring, but is kept closed by means of a button on the opposite side, and when released hangs down perpendicularly. It must be large enough to allow the passage of the somewhat elaborate headpiece of the Sphinx, and would therefore leave an open space visible round the neck. This difficulty is met by the expedient of having a wooden collar, the upper surface of which is a facsimile in size and pattern of the trap. This collar is fastened round the neck of the representative of the Sphinx. When he lifts his head up through the trap, the collar exactly fills the opening, and thus shows no break in the surface of the table. The box is bottomless, and when brought forward by the performer is empty. A little caution has to be observed in placing it upon the table, for, if the performer were to approach the table *from the side*, his legs would be reflected in the glass, and would thereby betray the secret. He must therefore make his appearance from some quarter *outside* of the curtained recess, and advance to a position well in front of, and at some little distance from the table, when, by moving in a straight line from the audience towards the middle leg *a*, he prevents this inconvenient reflection. The placing the box upon the table, and the unlocking it, allow time for the representative of the Sphinx to get his head into position within it. This done, the box is opened, and the rest depends on the dramatic talent of the performer and his assistant. The performance being concluded, the box is again locked, and the head withdrawn, a handful of ashes being introduced on the trap in its stead.

"The angle at which the two mirrors should be set cannot be determined absolutely, but will vary according to the distance and position of the surrounding drapery."

The above method is generally employed in working the Sphinx illusion, but it differs in one respect from that used by Colonel Stodare. In the Colonel's presentation of the trick, the box was not *bottomless*. It had a trap in it corresponding with a similar trap in the top of the table. Stodare carried the mystic chest to the "run down" after the lid was closed, and then, by his ventriloquial power, caused a muffled voice to issue from the receptacle, presumably that of the Sphinx. Thus the spectators were led to believe that the head was still in the

box, and that the table had nothing whatever to do with the trick. On opening the chest great was the surprise of everyone to behold the head completely vanished, the heap of ashes having taken its place. This was a very clever bit of *mise en scène*, and showed what an artist Stodare was.

And now for a word or two concerning the career of the clever producer of the Sphinx. Colonel Stodare never smelt powder nor directed the manœuvres of a regiment of red coats. His title was self-assumed, to bedazzle the English public. He never wielded any weapon save a wooden wand tipped with ivory. But he did that to perfection. His real name was Alfred Inglis. Little or nothing is known of his early life and education. His first appearance was at the Egyptian Hall, London, on Easter Monday, April 17, 1865, when he introduced, for the first time in England, those celebrated illusions of Hindostan, the "Mango Tree" and the "Indian Basket." It was on the occasion of his two-hundredth consecutive representation at the aforesaid hall that Stodare introduced the "Sphinx" trick, which at once attracted crowds. On Tuesday evening, November 21, 1865, he had the honor to appear before Queen Victoria, at Windsor Castle, on the occasion of the birthday of H. R. H. the Princess Royal, afterwards the Empress Frederick of Germany. Stodare died of consumption in 1866. He wrote two small treatises on magic: *The Art of Magic* (1865) and *Stodare's Fly-notes* (1866).

#### IV.

The inventor of the Sphinx, Mr. Tobin, sold the secret to M. Talrich, of Paris, the proprietor of a wax-works exhibition on the Boulevard de la Madeline. Talrich called his collection of figures the Musée Français. Impressed with the success of Madame Tussaud's "Chamber of Horrors," in connection with her wax-works exhibition in London, Talrich transformed the "Talking Head" into the "Decapitated Speaker." His presentation of the illusion was calculated to strike terror in the mind of the observer. Underneath his museum was a damp and mouldy cellar, which he fitted up for the exhibition. The visitor was conducted down a stairway, dimly lighted by a couple of antique

lamps suspended from the vaulted roof. When he reached the bottom he was suddenly confronted with a group of wax figures representing a scene under the Inquisition. Every detail of a torture chamber was given, such as is described by Victor Hugo in his *Notre Dame de Paris*. The cowed emissaries of the Holy Office were depicted in the act of putting a wretched victim to the torture. The light from a flambeau, held by one of the figures, illumined the ghastly scene. In this uncertain light everything was horribly majestic. Pushing onward and turning to the right, "the spectator passed through a dimly-lighted corridor, and found himself in front of a balustrade, breast-high, which extended across the entrance of a narrow recess. In the middle of this gloomy cellar, the floor of which was carpeted with musty straw, was seen a table, on which rested a human head, leaning slightly to one side and apparently asleep. On being addressed by the exhibitor the head raised itself, opened its eyes, and related its own history, including the details of its decapitation, after which it replied, in various languages, to questions put by those present."

One day a party of young students, out for a lark, began shooting bread pellets at the head, in order to test whether it had entirely lost all sensation. The Decapitated One, in his wrath, abused them soundly, in language that savored more of modern Paris than the days of the Inquisition. This affair got noised abroad, and gay young boulevardiers made up regular parties to go and shoot pellets at the head; this amusement they called "pop-gun practice." Some of these pellets, not so well "bred" (pardon the pun) as others, struck certain portions of the table which were apparently open, but from which they rebounded, clearly indicating that the supposed vacant space was really a sheet of looking-glass. M. Talrich then put a close-meshed wire grating between the spectators and their victim, but alas! the secret of the Inquisition was disclosed, and the palmy days of the Musée Français were over. Says Houdin: "The cause of M. Talrich's failure was the same that brought disaster to the Brothers Davenport. Too great confidence in the Parisian public led both parties to offer what, after all, were but ingenious conjuring tricks as supernatural phenomena."

## V.

A few years ago, the eminent English novelist, H. Rider-Haggard, evolved from his elastic imagination a wierd and wonderful romance of Darkest Africa, called "She, who must be obeyed." It was redolent of magic and mystery. The beautiful sorceress, "She," a damsel of Greek descent, had lived for centuries in the heart of Africa, ruling over generations of black subjects with an iron despotism, and subduing them by her necromantic power. She was worshiped as a goddess. Her immortality upon earth was due to the rejuvenating effects of the mystic fire of Kor, into which she plunged and renewed her youth at certain periods. Falling in love with a young English



"SHE." FIG. 1.



"SHE." FIG. 2.

explorer, who had succeeded in penetrating into her realm, the Rosicrucian spell was broken, and the beautiful "She" shriveled up and expired in agony while attempting to bathe in the flames of Kor. The scene, as depicted by the novelist, is very awe-inspiring. The book had a great vogue in its day, and was dramatized with fine effect.

"Have you seen 'She'?" was the apparently ungrammatical question asked by theatre-goers.

Finally, the conjurer, always ready to seize upon the fads and fancies of the day to make capital out of them, took the chief *motif* of Rider-Haggard's romance, and built upon it one



of the very best illusions in the domain of magic, called "She." I have understood that the inventor of "She" was the Chevalier Thorne. In this act, a young lady, garbed as the witch of the Dark Continent, was cremated in full view of the audience. It was the Sphinx trick over again, but in a more ingenious shape. The lady mounted a bare-legged table, whereupon an asbestos canopy was lowered over her, so that she was completely concealed from the audience. Suddenly flames and smoke poured forth from beneath the canopy. The shrieks of the victim were heard. When the cover was raised, nothing was to be seen except a blackened skull and some charred bones—the lady was presumably cremated. In another version of the trick, the skull and bones were dispensed with, and the lady reappeared in a private box or came running down the center aisle of the theatre, after the canopy was lifted.

Now for an explanation of the illusion.

The spectators saw an innocent-looking table with four legs, and beneath it, supported by a central rod, four supports holding lighted candles, very much on the order of a chandelier. This latter effect seemed to preclude the idea of mirrors being used. "But things are seldom what they seem," in magic at least. In reality the table had but *two* legs, and there were but *two* candles burning, the remaining legs and tapers being reflections. How was the deception accomplished? In the following manner: Converging at the central standard (Fig. 1) were two plane mirrors, fixed at an angle of ninety degrees with each other and forty-five degrees with the side panels of the screen which boxed in the table from the rest of the stage. These mirrors reflected the side panels, which were of the same color as the panel at the back, and made the spectators believe that they saw underneath the table the rear of the screen. They also reflected the two legs of the table and the two supports with their lighted candles. The triangular wooden box, upon the sides of which the mirrors were fastened, extended to the back panel of the screen. It was covered with cloth of the same color as that of the screen. This box was on a level with the top of the table.

The lady got away through a trap, after having placed the skull and bones in position and ignited a lot of red fire (Fig 2).



Another illusion in which the looking-glass plays a part is that of the Decapitated Princess. Instead of a table, a chair is used. The head stands upright upon two swords, which rest on the arms of the chair. A mirror, placed at an angle of forty-five degrees, reaching from the front part of the arms to the back edge of the seat, reflects the bottom of the chair, thereby induc-



THE DECAPITATED PRINCESS.

(From Hopkins' *Magic*, etc. Sci. Amer. Co.)

ing the spectators to believe that they see the back of the chair; *ergo*, the seat is empty. Of course, this seat is covered with like material as that of the back of the elaborately carved throne chair. The glass conceals the trap at the back, through which the lady sticks her head and part of her body. She wears about her neck a lace collar, so arranged as to rest nicely on the two swords.

I first saw this interesting illusion exhibited in a *café chantant* in Paris. The fat, thick-necked, little Frenchman, who presented the trick to the audience, reminded me of one of those human-headed bulls carved upon the walls of Assyrian palaces and temples. His hair and beard were oiled and curled. He bellowed out the marvels of his decapitated Princess, and flirted the skirts of his long Prince Albert coat like an animal lashing flies off its flanks with its tail. According to this Chevalier d'Ananias, the Princess lost her charming little powdered head during the reign of Robespierre I; it "sneezed into the basket" of the guillotine one fine morning while the knitting women sat around the scaffold and plied their needles and tongues. "Down with the Aristocrats!" Thanks to an eminent surgeon, who begged the head from the executioner, it was restored to life by hypnotic power. The surgeon handed it down to his descendants. Finally it came into possession of the showman, by what means the gentleman did not relate.

A few days after the above exhibition, I saw the poor little Princess eating cabbage soup in a second-class *cabaret*. Her manager was with her. Her head was on her body at the time.

## TREWEYISM.

"Le mime-comédien Trewey est un prestidigitateur merveilleux, créateur vraiment surprenant d'ombres chinoises avec l'unique secours de ses mains. On peut dire que Trewey est de ceux qui ont agrandi le cercle de la fantasmagorie et en ont fait un des astres les plus vagabonds de la fantaisie."—DOM BLASIUS: *L'Intransigeant*.

### I.

My favorite character in French fiction is Alexander Dumas' inimitable D'Artagnan, *le mousquetaire par excellence*, who comes out of Gascony with nothing but a rusty suit of clothes on his back, an ancestral sword at his side, his father's blessing, and a bony sorrel horse under him, to seek his fortune in the world. Aided by his good rapier, his wonderful *sang froid*, splendid audacity and versatile talents, he elbows his way to the foot of a throne, to become captain of the Grand Monarque's bodyguard, and eventually a marshal of France.

In the world of magic we have a similar character, not a mere figment, however, of the novelist's imagination, but a living, breathing personality. I refer to Félicien Trewey, the eminent French fantaisiste, whose life reads like a romance. M. Trewey possesses all of the qualities of heart and mind of Dumas' hero—audacity, versatility, tireless energy in the pursuit of his profession, bonhomie, and what not. Had he lived in the seventeenth century, he doubtless would have been a soldier of fortune like D'Artagnan, fought duels, made love to duchesses, and outwitted a cardinal, but having been born in an age of steam and electricity, and fully realizing the fact that science has reduced the art of war to mere mechanics, he sought out a career that promised the most romance and adventure, and became a mousquetaire of magic, wielding the wand instead of

the sword. It is a long, long way from the half-starved mountebank of a wandering caravan to an *Officier d'Académie* and landed proprietor living at ease in one's old age. But Trewey has accomplished all this.

## II.

One evening, when strolling along the Boulevard, I saw outside of the *Concert des Ambassadeurs*, a billboard, with the



TREWEY'S VILLA AT ASNIÈRES SUR SEINE. AU CLAIR DE LA LUNE.

following announcement: "Le Grand Trewey! Equilibre, Jonglerie, Prestidigitation.—Le Chapeau Multiforme ou 25 Têtes sous un Chapeau.—Mime.—Musique.—Silhouettes et Ombres des Mains, etc. Amusements Scientifiques et Récréatifs."

My interest was at once aroused. Here was no ordinary artist, but a man of versatility. I bought a ticket, and was soon seated in the theatre. After the usual infliction of skirt-dancers, acrobats and eccentric singers with raspy voices, the curtain fell on M. Trewey's act. I sighed with relief. Ah, here was an oasis in the vast Sahara of vaudeville claptrap and mediocrity.

I was not disappointed. The stage was elegantly set with gilt tables. The scene was boxed in with rich silk curtains *à la* Pinetti. A burst of applause (not confined to the *claque* either), and the great Trewey appeared. A long black cloak enveloped him.

## PROGRAMME

### PREMIÈRE PARTIE

# TREWEY

*Dans ses créations.*

Ouverture. — Equilibres et Jongleries.

### DEUXIÈME PARTIE

Fantaisies. — La Valse des Assiettes. — Les Cuvettes tapageuses. — Le Papier multiforme. — La Harpe éolienne. — Le Tabarin moderne.

### ENTR'ACTE

### TROISIÈME PARTIE

## LES OMBRES DES MAINS

PAR

# TREWEY

Ouverture.

- 1<sup>re</sup> Série. — Le Lapin. — Les deux Oies. — Le Perroquet.  
— Le Poisson. — L'Eléphant. — Le Taureau. — Le Cygne. — Le Prédicateur.  
— Le Chat. — Le Chien.
- 2<sup>e</sup> Série. — Le Batelier. — Le Pêcheur. — Le Jockey.  
La Danseuse de corde.
- 3<sup>e</sup> Série. — Les Amours du Policeman, pantomime.
- 4<sup>e</sup> Série. — Silhouettes et Profils illustrés.
- 5<sup>e</sup> Série. — Le Clown et l'Ane savant.
- 6<sup>e</sup> Série. — Le Buveur normand et le Rigolo. —  
Au Revoir..., galop final.

*Le piano sera tenu par M. Henri DEVIENNE.*

Tous les dimanches et jeudis, à 2 heures,

## TREWEY

MATINÉE DE FAMILLE

Throwing this off, he appeared in full court costume—a gentleman of the reign of Louis XVI. I felt like asking him, “When did you see last the Chevalier Pinetti?” After a very superior exhibition of juggling and sleight of hand with cards and coins,



he passed on to ombromanie, or hand-made shadows, among them being portraits of Thiers, Gladstone, Czar Alexander III, Emile Zola, Gambetta, Bismarck, Crispi and Lord Salisbury. The art of casting silhouettes of animals, such as the dog, the cat, and the rabbit, upon an illuminated wall is very ancient. The Italian painter, Campi, was one of the first to add new types to the collection of figures. Trewey raised the art to the dignity of a stage performance, and endowed it with movement



TREWEY EXHIBITING UPON A STAGE.

and life. I shall quote as follows from an article on Trewey, contributed by me to the "Cosmopolitan Magazine" some years ago:

"He stands behind a screen, which is brilliantly illuminated by an oxyhydrogen light, and with his hands projects the silhouettes—pictures of soldiers, peasants, abbés, etc., to say nothing of animals. To form the headgear of his men and women, such as the grotesque bonnets of Norman *bonnes*, the *képis* of the little *piou-pious*, and the mortar-boards of the English scholastics, he has recourse to small pieces of cardboard cut to resemble the respective cranial coverings. Trewey is not content with the 'cold profiles,' as he calls them, of living creatures,



THUR



GLADSTONE



BISMARCK



ALEXANDER III



GAMBETTA



JOHN SALISBURY



CHURCH



ZOLA

TREWEY'S SILHOUETTES OF EMINENT MEN.



THE PULPIT PANTOMIME.

... their mouths, gesticulate; his animals are ... Besides this, he makes his characters enact ... pantomimic scenes. One he calls the 'serenade.'

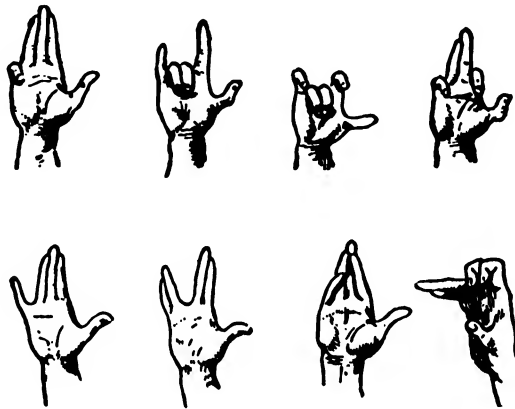


TREWEY'S HANDS.

A piece of cardboard, fashioned to represent the side of a house, constitutes the scenery. A gendarme (supposed to be violently



in love with the servant girl) knocks at the door of the mansion, whereupon his fair *inamorata* appears at the upstairs window. After an exchange of compliments, she withdraws from the window and reappears at the door. She gives to her lover a drink from a suspicious bottle, and he, after wiping his beard, kisses her and retires. Then comes the strolling musician, playing a lugubrious melody on the clarinet. The owner of the house rushes to the bedroom window and motions the player away, but the musician derisively strikes up a lively tune. The irate proprietor now makes his appearance armed with a long



EXERCISES FOR THE FINGERS BY TREWEY.

broom, with which he thrashes the clarinettist. The musician still persisting, paterfamilias next produces the water jug, and from the upstairs window pours the contents upon the head of the luckless serenader, who quickly makes his exit.

"The little accessories used in this act, such as the helmet for the policeman, the broom, bottle, etc., are cut from pasteboard and, where necessary, attached to the fingers of the performer by means of india-rubber rings. The water jug, however, is an actual little vessel, which is filled with sand. When this is poured out it simulates a flow of water in the most natural manner.

"The 'pulpit orator' is a clever silhouette. About the left arm of the performer is tied a small box, which represents the pulpit; the bent fingers make a canopy. Between the fingers of

the right hand is held a bit of pasteboard, cut in the shape of a mortar-board cap. The paraphernalia is very simple. You see the learned divine ascend the pulpit, bend forward in prayer, then begin to exhort an imaginary congregation. He thumps the pulpit rail vehemently, twists himself into all sorts of grotesque positions, and wipes his perspiring brow. After having blessed the people, he descends from his elevated perch."

I learned from him many interesting things about shadowgraphy and sleight of hand generally. To excel in the art of ombromanie requires long practice. The fingers have to be exercised continuously in certain peculiar movements, such as are depicted in the accompanying illustration. Dexterity is largely dependent upon the formation of the hand, one of the particular characteristics of skillfulness being "the faculty of reversing the metacarpal phalanges of the fingers, so that when the hand is extended it is convex." Trewey possesses this faculty. Another peculiarity of his hands is the formation of the fingers; they differ very much in length. The middle finger exceeds the ring finger by nearly an inch.

### III.

I met Trewey some weeks later, in London, at the Empire Theatre, and we struck up a great friendship which has lasted to this day. The story of his life is full of interest, and is a typical example of the folly of setting anyone to a vocation for which he has no particular taste. Intended at first for the priesthood by his parents, and subsequently for a mechanical trade, Trewey followed his own inclinations—conjuring and juggling. I will quote again from my paper in the "Cosmopolitan Magazine":

"Like most artists who have risen to eminence on the French stage, Trewey has known hardships and bitter poverty. His youth was a struggle against adverse conditions. But he had in him, in its truest sense, the soul of old Gaul—that joyous insouciance, that sardonic humor, which laughs at fortune and snaps its finger at the world. Natural vivacity will often keep a Frenchman alive, though his body is clothed in rags and his

stomach is empty. Treway was born at Angoulême, France, during the Revolution of 1848. His father was an engineer in a paper mill. Treway *père* was ambitious for his son to enter the Church, so he sent him to the Seminary of the Holy Trinity at Marseilles to study for the priesthood. But fate had willed otherwise. When quite a young boy, Treway had been taken to see a circus at Marseilles. Among the mountebanks was a conjurer, who gave a very interesting exhibition. The feats of magic of this strolling Merlin so fascinated the little Treway that he forthwith secretly vowed to become a professional prestidigitateur as soon as he grew up. The studies pursued at the Jesuit college did not cure the boy of his love for the stage. He divided his time between Latin verbs and juggling, mathematics and the art of palmistry. Soon he was able to give little exhibitions, private, of course, for the amusement of his comrades. The good fathers must have thought him a very eccentric youth, for he was continually trying to balance his slate on the tip of his nose. Many a well-deserved cat-o'-nine-tails he got for his improvised feats of equilibration. Lying awake at night in the silent dormitory, he invented tricks, then fell asleep to dream of the wild delights of the mountebank's life—wandering like a gipsy over the country in a caravan, and performing at the little French villages and towns before crowds of rustics. He pictured himself dressed in gorgeous raiment, exhibiting magic tricks for the amusement of gaping yokels—pulling rabbits from hats, turning omelets into doves, and producing bowls of goldfish from shawls. The boom, boom, of the bass drum, calling the spectators together, resounded in his ears. The boy had in him the spirit of adventure; the blood of some old strolling player of an ancestor ran in his veins. He longed to escape from under the watchful domination of the 'black robes,' as he designated the good priests of the seminary. Three years passed. One day, during the Christmas holidays, Treway refused to return to his studies, so his father placed him in the engine room of the paper mill to learn machinery. Cog wheels and oil cans possessed no more fascination for him than Latin and Greek. One fine summer day he ran away from home in company with an acrobat.

"Trewey, at this period of his career, was not over fifteen years of age, and had but little experience of men and manners. The quiet cloisters of a Jesuit seminary are not conducive to knowledge of the world. Life now became hard for Trewey and his companion, the youthful tumbler. They exhibited in market places, cafés, and in inn yards. The life they led was next door to starvation. Soon Trewey left the acrobat and obtained an engagement at one of the small music halls of Marseilles. The munificent sum of six francs per week (one dollar and twenty cents) was the salary he received for his services. In addition to his juggling exhibition, given several times a day, he was obliged to appear in a pantomime performance at night. In this troupe was the famous Plessis, who eventually became one of the foremost comedians of France, rivaling even the great Coquelin.

"In those days it was the custom for people to throw money on the stage to favorite performers. Applauding with the hands being monopolized by a paid clique, there was no better way for enthusiastic spectators, in French places of amusement, to show their appreciation of the talents of an artist, than by showering upon him gold, silver or copper coins. The vaudeville artists did not consider it beneath their dignity to stoop and gather up these substantial evidences of public favor.

"Said Trewey to me: 'I saved these coins until I was able to purchase two fine costumes. Then I secured an engagement at the Alcazar at Marseilles.'

"Other engagements followed this, and Trewey became the most popular performer in the south of France. The desire for a roving life led him to become the proprietor of a traveling pantomime and vaudeville company. His versatility was shown here. He juggled, conjured, played Pierrot in the pantomime, danced in the clodoche, and managed the finances of the troupe. After two years of this life, he got an engagement at Bordeaux. It was here that he invented his ombromanie, and straightway became famous. From Bordeaux he migrated to Paris. His success was instantaneous."

The journalists rallied to his aid. He became the lion of the hour. *L'Illustration* named his art Treweyism. His reputation was established.

## IV.

Trewey is a mimic *par excellence*. He is past master in the art of pantomime and facial expression. One of his particular acts, which has given rise to numerous imitations, is entitled, "Tabarin, or Twenty-five Heads Under One Chapeau." Thanks to a piece of black felt cloth, circular in shape, with a hole cut in the center, Trewey is able to manufacture in a few minutes all the varieties of headgear required for the Tabarin. For example: Napoleon—A couple of twists of the cloth, and lo! you have a representation of *le chapeau de Marengo*, the little cocked hat which Napoleon made famous, and about which so many legends cluster. With this hastily improvised hat on his head, Trewey assumes the Napoleonic attitude—one hand thrust into his vest, the other behind his back. His physiognomy is that of the great Emperor, as depicted by the painters of the Imperial régime. The likeness is perfect. And so with fat French priests, soldiers, *bonnes*, landladies, artists, diplomats, etc. It is a portrait gallery of French types; Gavarni lives for us again. And just here, let me digress a moment to explain the origin of the curious word *Tabarin*, which, as all lovers of French comedy know, has passed into the repertory of the national theatre. In the seventeenth century, that bridge of memories, the old Pont Neuf of Paris, was the rendezvous of quacksalvers and mountebanks. Booths for the sale of various articles lined the sides of the bridge. People flocked there to see the sights, to laugh, chat, make love and enjoy life as only Parisians can. Students and grisettes of the *Quartier Latin* elbowed ladies and gentlemen of the court. Bourgeois families came to study the flippant manners of their superiors. Poodle clippers plied their trade; jugglers amused the *quid nuncs* with feats of dexterity; traveling dentists pulled teeth and sold bal-sams; clowns tumbled, and last, but not least, pickpockets lifted purses and silk handkerchiefs with impunity. Says Augustus J. C. Hare (*Walks in Paris*): "So central an artery is the Pont Neuf, that it used to be a saying with the Parisian police, that if, after watching three days, they did not see a man cross the bridge, he must have left Paris." Any popular witticism in verse was long known as *un Pont-Neuf*. One of the principal

vendors of quack nostrums of the Pont Neuf was Montdor. He was aided by a buffoon named Tabarin, who made facetious replies to questions asked by his master, accompanied with laughable grimaces and grotesque gestures. The modern ring-master and clown of the circus have similar scenes together, minus the selling of medicines. Tabarin was celebrated for his wit. Some of his *bon mots* have descended to our time. He performed the feat of making some ten different hats out of the brim of a felt hat, giving appropriate facial portraits beneath each, and using wigs and beards to enhance the effect. Such, in brief, is the story of the famous Merry Andrew whose name has become a by-word in France for buffoonery and broad humor. The biographies of such men would make interesting reading for the student of history. But Dame Clio has eyes only for tremendous battles, diplomatic intrigues, the doings of royalty and great folk. The little world of everyday life, that busy ant hill where the human comedy is so ardently played, is beneath her notice. The life and adventures of quacksalvers, minor poets, wandering jugglers, faugh!—that is asking too much of the Muse of History. Says Guizot: "History has no room for all those who throng about her gates without succeeding in getting in and leaving traces of their stay."

But occasionally a man or woman rises from the dregs of the people and compels recognition; and, sad to relate, nine times out of ten, through the commission of crimes. Have we not Cagliostro and Madame de la Motte, thorough-paced scoundrels and charlatans, but, nevertheless, very delightful folk, who have added a tinge of romance to history? I for one, with Thackeray, confess a weakness for the tittle-tattle of court gossip and backstairs diplomacy. Behind the scenes with Louis XV and XVI, Frederick the Great and Catherine II is far more entertaining than the battles of the period. Casanova gives one a better picture of eighteenth century morals and manners than any of the great historians of the time. History is the dry bones of an epoch; the memoir writers are the Ezekiels who behold the bones clothed with flesh and thrilling with life-blood.

Wandering one morning across the old Pont Neuf, all these thoughts came to my mind. Once again, as in the days of long



THE TABARIN.

ago, I saw, in my imagination, the bridge crowded with people. There came to me the faint rustling of silk skirts, the clatter of high-heeled shoes upon the paving stones. Boom! boom! goes the drum. I hear the strident voice of Montdor shouting out his wares, and the unctuous notes of the comical Tabarin uttering a *bon mot*.

## V.

Trewey is the inventor of many clever card sleights and passes; for example, a color change executed by taking cards from the back of the pack with the fork of the thumb and forefinger and placing them on the front. The origin of this clever sleight is not generally known. I have seen him throw cards from the stage of the Alhambra Theatre, London, to the topmost gallery. This is a tremendous feat, as the Alhambra is one of the largest theatres in the world. He possesses the peculiar talent of writing in reverse, necessitating the use of a mirror in order to read it. The artistic sentiment was born in him. It seems to be a family characteristic. Rosa Bordas, the celebrated French *chanteuse patriotique*, is his cousin-german. A writer in *L'Echo des Jeunes* thus apostrophises him in verse:

"Dans le monde artistique ou son étoile brille,  
Trewey ne peut que ressortir,  
Vraiment, cela tient de famille,  
Vu que bon sang ne peut mentir."

The most exclusive and aristocratic salons of Paris and Vienna have engaged his services for private séances. In Spain, Belgium, Austria, Russia and England he was the sensation of the day. At the present time he is living in retirement at Asnières, near Paris, where he has purchased a charming home known as the Villa Traversière *au clair de la lune*. During the Exposition of 1900 he was the manager of the Theatre Phono-Cinéma. Trewey was a great friend of the French inventor, Lumière, and was the first to introduce the cinematographe to the public of London and Paris. At his villa he spends his time inventing and improving devices to be used in moving-picture apparatus, corresponding with his friends, meditating upon the works of his favorite authors, Confucius and





MONS. TREWEY.  
JUUGLER, SHADOWGRAPHIST, AND—WELL, EVERYTHING.

FROM "THE ENTR'ACTE," LONDON, MAY 7, 1887.

Epictetus, and writing songs, farces and dramatic articles. In the year 1903 he was made an *Officier d'Académie* by the French Government. He married Miss Ixa, of Trocadero fame. Among his pupils may be mentioned the lady conjurer, Mlle. Patrice.

Trewey relates many interesting anecdotes of contemporary French magicians whom he has met on his travels. He is literally a man without envy. His admiration for Buatier de Kolta was unbounded. They were close friends.

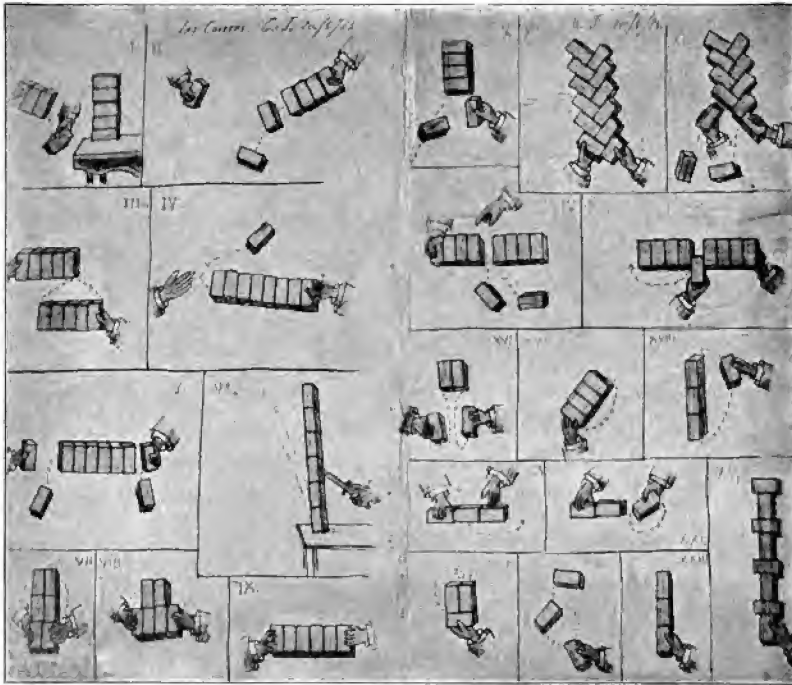
He once toured the Continent with the Hungarian conjurer, Velle, who was the first to give exhibitions within a marked circle, where the audience could gather on all sides. Velle impersonated Mephisto to perfection. Trewey and August Lassaigne were once partners. Lassaigne was born in Toulouse, in 1819. Besides being a magician he was an aeronaut, having made 347 ascensions. He died in Montpellier in the year 1887.

When Trewey first toured the United States, under the management of Alexander Herrmann, he was very much annoyed by impostors, who advertised themselves as *Drewey*, but their performances were only weak imitations of the original—the merest shadows of a shade. In the wake of the whale follow little fishes—"pikers"—who grab at the crumbs dropped by the monarch of the sea, being too lazy or indifferent to find hunting seas of their own.

"Many amateurs are more skillful than professionals," said Trewey to me. "I have in mind my friend Alexandre Asso, who was born in Paris in the year 1828. While a student, he once happened to be present at a soirée where M. Comte was giving an exhibition. He was so fascinated that he afterwards took lessons in legerdemain from the professor. When he finished his schooling, he entered the service of the Count de Nigra, then Ambassador to Italy, and remained with him for forty years, visiting London, St. Petersburg, Vienna, and other great capitals. Asso often entertained the Count and his friends with conjuring séances. In this way he amused society at nearly all the Courts of Europe, besides giving many entertainments for the benefit of the poor. In spite of his advanced age, he still keeps in practice as a conjurer at his villa at Asnières. He

retired from an active life in 1903. We see a great deal of each other.

"Then we have M. Pitau, a wine merchant, who studied legerdemain to amuse his friends and increase his custom. He was a capital guest at the hotel table. People loved to be seated near him, for he was not only skilful at hanky panky with glasses, plates, napkins, knives, corks, coins, etc., but he was a



A LEAF FROM TREWEY'S NOTE BOOK.

brilliant raconteur and a mimic. His most amusing trick was the following: He would place his hat over his plate, which held perhaps a chop and potatoes. Passing his hand under the hat he would bring forth several five-franc pieces. Then he would pass it a second time beneath the chapeau and bring out five or six gold one-hundred-franc pieces. Now he would exclaim: 'Ladies and gentlemen, I will give what is left on the plate for ten centimes.' Lifting the hat, a child's sock or an old shoe

would be seen, the chop and potatoes having vanished. This feat was always greeted with shouts of laughter. Pitau often gave entire performances for charitable purposes."

Behind the scenes in an Egyptian temple would doubtless have revealed many curious secrets of natural magic to the uninitiated. Like all so-called sorcerers, the priests evidently compiled works on the subject of their art for the benefit of their successors. But not one of these has come down to us. Hermes Trismegistus is said to have written two myriads of books on the occult sciences. He was the Alexander Dumas of the Egyptian pantheon.

Trewey, an apt descendant of the ancient magi of the land of Mizraim, has compiled a ponderous folio of illusions and feats of juggling and legerdemain; a great manuscript volume of mysteries, the text of which is illustrated by pen-and-ink sketches by himself. Over two thousand magical experiments are described and explained in this tome of thaumaturgy, gathered from all sources, many of them being his own inventions, perhaps the majority of them. I know that this volume exists, for I have seen it and glanced over it. I have urged Trewey to publish the work. Perhaps he will some day, now that he has the leisure for literary labors. He is at present at work on his invention, the *Treweyorama*, which will be exhibited soon in Paris.

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